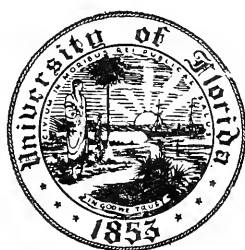


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# THE MODERN POETS



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AN AMERICAN-BRITISH ANTHOLOGY

*edited by* JOHN MALCOLM BRINNIN, *University of Connecticut*

*and* BILL READ, *Boston University*

*with photographs by* ROLLIE McKENNA

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## PREFACE

AMONG THE WORKS OF MODERN POETS, poems that give pleasure are far more common, we believe, than poems that present problems. To make an anthology that would confirm this belief, we have looked into the weighty collected poems of recognized masters and the modest first volumes of apprentices. Confining ourselves to the contemporary, we have nevertheless been able to choose from a range spanning five or six generations of American and British verse. Our aim has been to pick, from the works of the finest living poets, poems of representative substance and power that can travel freely in any English-speaking country without an interpreter. Having found these in abundance, we present them in confidence that they will move, delight, and beguile even those readers who encounter them for the first time. Instead of the usual notes, we have informal commentaries and brief biographies. The photographic portraits have a documentary interest in themselves. In a determination to avoid the sort of well-meaning apparatus which is designed to initiate and instruct but which, too often, only alienates and befuddles, we have otherwise allowed the poems to speak for themselves.

Contrary to rumor, modern poetry is not an obstacle course or an occult science. Such notions, infectious as the common cold and just as hard to shake, have tended to put a curse on poetry—a form of art that, above everything else, is a communication to be shared. The poems in this volume invite congenial acquaintance. They give proof, page by page, that before they are puzzles to be solved or substances to be analyzed, they are human documents waiting to be claimed.

Where we have provided commentary, our aim has been merely to set a perspective, identify an allusion, turn a key that may help to make a first reading a comparatively full and easy one. Commentary cannot account for the ultimate values of any poem, but, by supplying points of information and by suggesting interpretations, we can perhaps provide the bases on which these values may be discovered. We trust that most of the poems are self-contained and self-explanatory.

Ezra Pound was unavailable to be photographed by Rollie McKenna. The only other poet not represented by a portrait is E. E. Cummings, whose death occurred while this volume was being prepared.

JOHN MALCOLM BRINNIN  
BILL READ

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## THE MODERN POETS





**DANNIE ABSE**, born September, 1923, in Wales, lives in Golders Green, London, with his wife and two children. His early life as a member of a socially conscious Jewish family in Wales is recorded in his autobiographical novel *Ash on a Young Man's Sleeve*. Like his father, he is a physician and during World War II served with the Medical Corps of the Royal Air Force. He was one of the founders of a mid-fifties movement in poetry whose members were known as "mavericks" and whom critics tended to categorize as "neo-Georgian."

*The person to whom this poem is addressed is, like the author, both a physician and a poet. Ehrlich was the German scientist who discovered salvarsan after 606 experiments; Koch was another German, who devised a method of staining bacteria with aniline dyes, leading to his discovery of the bacterial causes of many infectious diseases; "that Greek" is Archimedes, whose cry, translated back to its original, was "Eureka!"*

#### LETTER TO ALEX COMFORT

ALEX, perhaps a colour of which neither of us had dreamt may appear in the test-tube with God knows what admonition. Ehrlich certainly was one who broke down the mental doors, yet only after his six hundred and sixth attempt.

Koch also, painfully and with true German thoroughness eliminated the impossible, and proved that too many of us are dying from the same disease. Yet was his green dream, like yours, fired to burn away an ancient distress.

Still I, myself, don't like Germans, but prefer the unkempt voyagers, who, like butterflies drunk with suns, can only totter crookedly in the dazed air to reach charmingly their destination, as if by accident.

That Greek one then is my hero, who watched the bath water rise above his navel and rushed out naked, 'I found it, I found it' into the street in all his shining, and forgot that others would only stare at his genitals. What laughter!

Or Newton, leaning in Woolsthorpe against the garden wall forgot his indigestion and all such trivialities, but gaped up at heaven in just surprise, and with true gravity, witnessed the vertical apple fall.

O what a marvellous observation! Who would have reckoned  
that such a pedestrian miracle could alter history,  
that henceforward everyone must fall, whatever  
their rank, at thirty-two feet per second, per second?

You too, I know, have waited for doors to fly open and played  
with your cold chemicals and written long letters  
to the Press; listened to the truth afraid and dug deep  
into the wriggling earth for a rainbow, with an honest spade.

But nothing rises. Neither spectres, nor oil, nor love.  
And the old professor must think you mad, Alex, as you rehearse  
poems in the laboratory like vows, and curse those clever scientists  
who dissect away the wings and the haggard heart from the dove.

*In a century when nearly all times seem to be periods  
between wars, poets have often attempted to render  
the general fears of whole nations in specific, per-  
sonal, and therefore more emotional terms. Here the  
author uses unusual words like metaphrast (one who  
alters the sense of something) and preterites (words  
or tenses that belong to the past) as he relates a  
small incident in relation to the bad dream of the  
past and the appalling prospect of the future.*

#### VERSES AT NIGHT

SLEEPLESS, by the windowpane I stare—  
black aeroplanes disturb the air.  
The ticking moon glares down aghast.  
The seven branched tree is bare.

Oh how much like Europe's gothic Past!  
This scene my nightmare's metaphrast:  
glow of the radioactive worm,  
the preterites of the Blast.

Unreal? East and West fat Neros yearn  
for other fiddled Romes to burn,  
and so dogma cancels dogma  
and heretics in their turn.

By my wife now I lie quiet as a  
thought of how moon and stars might blur,  
and miles of smoke squirm overhead  
rising to Man's arbiter;

the grey skin shrivelling from the head,  
our two skulls in the double bed,  
leukaemia in the soul of all  
flowing through the blood instead.

'No', I shout, as by her side I sprawl,  
'No', again, as I hear my small  
dear daughter whimper in her cot  
and across the darkness call.





**CONRAD AIKEN**, born August 5, 1889, in Savannah, Georgia, has recently returned with his wife to live in his native city after having for many years lived variously in the village of Brewster on Cape Cod, an apartment in New York, and several houses in Rye, on the Sussex coast of England. He went to Harvard as a member of the famous class of 1911, which included T. S. Eliot, Heywood Broun, Robert Benchley, and Walter Lippmann, and has subsequently published scores of works including novels, short stories, plays, criticism, and the autobiography *Ushant*, in which he recounts the story of his equal but divided loyalty to his own culture and that of England. He was Consultant in Poetry at the Library of Congress for two years but has otherwise declined public positions and avoided public appearances.

*By showing how the springtime of Cape Cod, the  
landfall of Pilgrims who crossed on the Mayflower,  
repeats the springtime of the Elizabethan poets William  
Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, and William Drummond  
—who are here designated as “Will,” “Ben,” and “the  
crab-apple sage at Hawthornden,” respectively—the  
poet reflects on the continuity of history, the  
echoes of lost language, and the persistence  
of human aspiration.*

#### MAYFLOWER

**L**ISTEN: the ancient voices hail us from the farther shore:  
now, more than ever, in the New England spring,  
we hear from the sea once more  
the ghostly leave-takings, the hawser falling, the anchor weighing,  
cries and farewells, the weeping on the quayside, and the praying:  
and the devout fathers, with no thought to fail,  
westward to unknown waters set joyless sail,  
and at length, ‘by God’s providence,’ ‘by break of day espied  
land, which we deemed to be Cape Cod.’  
‘It cause us to rejoice together and praise God,  
seeing so goodly a land, and wooded to the brink of the sea.’  
And still we share that providential tide,  
the pleasant bay, wooded on every side  
with ‘oaks, pines, juniper, sassafras,’ and the wild fowl rising  
in clouds and numbers past surmising.  
Yes: the ancient voices speak once more,  
as spring, praised then by Will and Ben,  
winds up our country clock again:  
their spring, still living, now  
when caterpillars tent the bough,  
and seagulls speak  
over the ale-wives running in Payne Creek.  
The lyre-tree, seven-branched, the ancient plum, has cast

her sterile bloom, and the soft skin is cast  
to glisten on the broken wall,  
where the new snake sleeps in altered light;  
and before sun-up, and late at night,  
the pinkwinks shrill, the pinkwinks trill,  
crying from the bog's edge to lost Sheepfold Hill.  
Spring, spring, spring, spring, they cry,  
water voice and reed voice,  
spring, spring, spring, spring, they rejoice,  
we who never die, never die!  
But already the mayflower on the side hill is brown and dry,  
Dry Hill is dry, the bog is drained,  
and although for weeks it has not rained,  
and the quick plough breaks dust,  
yet towards summer the golden-rod and wormwood thrust.  
The woodchuck is in the peas. And on his log,  
the whip-poor-will shrieks and thumps in the bright May-morning fog.

Three hundred years from Will and Ben,  
and the crab-apple sage at Hawthornden;  
and now they wind our country clock again,  
themselves, whose will it was that wound it then.  
Three hundred years of snow and change,  
the Mermaid voices growing lost and strange;  
heard at first clearly on this yellow sand,  
ghost voices, shadow of ghost and whisper of ghost,  
haunting us briefly in the bright and savage land,  
heard in the sea-roar, then sunk in silence, lost.  
Yet not lost wholly:  
in deed, in charter, and in covenant sweetly kept,  
in laws and ordinances, in the Quaker's Thee and Thou,  
in the grave rites of birth and death, the marriage vow,  
and the ballad's melancholy.  
Sung by the driftwood fire or behind the plough,  
in the summer-kitchen to the warm cricket-song,

sung at maying, sung at haying,  
shouted at husking to the fiddle's playing,  
murmured to the cradle's rocking,  
and the wheel humming, the treadle knocking.  
And in the names kept too: sorrel and purslane,  
ground-ivy, catnip, elecampane,  
burdock and spurge, and sultry tansy,  
woad-waxen, and the johnny-jump-up pansy.  
Yet even so, though in the observance kept,  
here most of all where first our fathers stept,  
was something of the spirit that became idle, and at last  
lost all that love; and heard no more  
the voices singing from a distant shore.  
Intricately, into the present, sank the past:  
or, dreaming only of the future, slept.

## II

God's Acres once were plenty, the harvest good:  
five churchyards, six, in this sparse neighbourhood,  
each with its huddled parish of straight stones,  
green rows of sod above neat rows of bones.  
The weeping willow grieves above the urn,  
the hour-glass with wings awaits its immortal turn:  
on every slab a story and a glory,  
the death's head grinning his memento mori.  
All face the sunset, too: all face the west.  
What dream was this of a more perfect rest—?  
One would have thought the east, that the first ray  
might touch them out of darkness into day.  
Or were they sceptics, and perforce, in doubt,  
wistful to watch the last of light go out?  
And in the sunset the names look westward, names like eyes:  
the sweet-sounding and still watchful names. Here lies  
Mercy or Thankful, here Amanda Clark,  
the wife of Rufus; nor do they dread the dark,

but gaily now step down the road past Stony Brook,  
call from the pasture as from the pages of a book,  
their own book, but their own lives written,  
each look and laugh and heartache, nothing forgotten.  
Rufus it was who cleared of bullbriar the Long Field,  
walled it with fieldstone, and brought to fabulous yield  
the clay-damp corner plot, where wild grape twines.  
Amanda planted the cedars, the trumpet-vines,  
mint-beds, and matrimony vine, and columbines.  
Each child set out and tended his own tree,  
to each his name was given. Thus, they still live, still see:  
Mercy, Deborah, Thankful, Rufus and Amanda Clark,  
trees that praise sunlight, voices that praise the dark.  
The houses are gone, the little shops are gone,  
squirrels preach in the chapel. A row of stone  
all now that's left of the cobbler's, or in tall grass  
a scrap of harness where once the tannery was.  
And the blue lilacs, the grey laylocks, take possession  
round every haunted cellar-hole, like an obsession:  
keep watch in the dead houses, on vanished stairs,  
where Ephraim or Ahira mended chairs:  
sneak up the slope where once the smoke-house stood  
and herrings bronzed in smoke of sweet fernwood.  
Lost, lost, lost, lost—the bells from Quivett Neck  
sing through the Sabbath fog over ruin and wreck,  
roofs sinking, walls falling, ploughland grown up to wood.  
Five churchyards, six, in this sparse neighbourhood:  
God's Acres once were plenty, the harvest good.

### III

Three hundred years: in time's eye only a moment.  
Time only for the catbird's wail,  
from one June to another, flaunting his tail,  
the joyful celebrant with his own mournful comment.  
Time only for the single dream,

as, in this misty morning, all our generations seem,  
seem only one, one face, one hope, one name:  
those who first crossed the sea, first came,  
and the newborn grandchild, crying, one and the same.  
Yes now, now most of all, in the fateful glare  
of mankind's hatred everywhere,  
time yields its place, with its own bell  
uncharms and then recharms its spell:  
and time is gone, but everything else is here,  
all is clear, all is one day, one year,  
the many generations seem,  
and are, one single purpose, one single name and dream.  
Three hundred years from Will and Ben  
our country clock's wound up again.  
And as it chimes we hear ourselves still saying  
the living words which they said then—  
words for haying, words for maying,  
love of earth, love of love, love of God,  
but most the strong-rooted and sweet-smelling love of sod,  
earth natural and native in the clay-red heart,  
ourselves like pines in the sand growing, part  
of the deep water underground,  
the wild rose in the mouth, the sound  
of leaves in surf and surf in leaves,  
wind suffering in the chimney and round the eaves,  
forgetfulness in the chattering brook, sleepiness in the sand,  
forget-me-nots in the eyes, moonlight in the palm of the hand.

All's here, all's kept, for now  
spring brings back the selfsame apple bough  
that braved the sea three hundred years ago.  
It is our heart, our love, which we had lost,  
our very ghost,  
forgotten in trouble on an alien coast.  
Now, in the many-voiced country lane

which parts the fields of poverty grass and clover,  
as the loud quail repeats twice over  
Bob White, not quite, not quite, Bob White,  
see it again and say it again,  
world without end to love and have it,  
bee-blossom heart to love and live it,  
this holy land, our faith itself, to share again  
with our godfathers, Will and Ben.

**KINGSLEY AMIS**, born April 16, 1922, in London, lives with his wife and three children in Cambridge, where he is a fellow of Peterhouse. He is best known as a writer of fiction, especially for his comic novel *Lucky Jim* whose central



character has become one of the most widely discussed figures in recent British literature. He is an authority on jazz and science fiction, about which he contributes articles to a number of magazines. In 1958–1959, he was visiting lecturer at Princeton and, until his recent appointment to Cambridge, taught in Wales at University College, Swansea.



THE door still swinging to, and girls revive,  
 Aeronauts in the utmost altitudes  
     Of boredom fainting, dive  
 In the bright oxygen of my nod;  
 Angels as well, a squadron of draped nudes,  
     They roar towards their god.

Militant all, they fight to take my hat,  
 No more as yet; the other men retire  
     Insulted, gestured at;  
 Each girl presses on me her share of what  
 Makes up the barn-door target of desire:  
     And I am a crack shot.

Speech fails them, amorous, but each one's look,  
 Endorsed in other ways, begs me to sign  
     Her body's autograph-book;  
 "Me first, Kingsley; I'm cleverest" each declares,  
 But no gourmet races downstairs to dine,  
     Nor will I race upstairs.

Feigning aplomb, perhaps for half an hour,  
 I hover, and am shown by each princess  
     The entrance to her tower;  
 Open, in that its tenant throws the key  
 At once to anyone, but not unless  
     The anyone is me.

Now from the corridor their fathers cheer,  
 Their brothers, their young men; the cheers increase  
     As soon as I appear;  
 From each I win a handshake and sincere  
 Congratulations; from the chief of police  
     A nod, a wink, a leer.

This over, all delay is over too;  
The first eight girls (the roster now agreed)  
    Leap on me, and undo . . .  
But honesty impels me to confess  
That this is 'all a dream', which was, indeed,  
    Not difficult to guess.

But wait; not 'just a dream', because, though good  
And beautiful, it is also true, and hence  
    Is rarely understood;  
Who would choose any feasible ideal  
In here and now's giant circumference,  
    If that small room were real?

Only the best; the others find, have found  
Love's ordinary distances too great,  
    And eager, stand their ground;  
Map-drunk explorers, dry-land sailors, they  
See no arrival that can compensate  
    For boredom on the way;

And, seeming doctrinaire, but really weak,  
Limelighted dolls guttering in their brain,  
    They come with me, to seek  
The halls of theoretical delight,  
The women of that ever-fresh terrain,  
    The night after to-night.



W. H. AUDEN, born February 21, 1907, in York, England, lives in New York City and in Kirchstetten, Austria. He was educated at Oxford, where he began to publish the poems that were to set the tone and climate for what later became known as the "Auden generation" of poets. After a short period of participation in the Spanish Civil War as a civilian on the Loyalist side, and marriage to Erika, the daughter of Thomas Mann, he came to the United States in 1939 and, a few years later, became an American citizen. He has taught for short periods at the University of Michigan, Swarthmore, Smith, and at the New School for Social Research, in New York, where his course in Shakespeare drew such crowds of students that a secretary was moved to remark, "You'd think Shakespeare was giving a course in Auden." Besides many volumes of poetry, a volume of essays, and two travel books, *Letters from Iceland* and *Journey to a War*, on which he collaborated with Louis MacNeice and the novelist Christopher Isherwood, respectively, he has collaborated with Isherwood on three plays and with Chester Kallman on the librettos of two operas.

*St. Cecilia, who lived in second- or third-century Rome, is the virgin martyr who came to be regarded as the patroness of music. In literature and art she is usually represented at the organ. The vision of Aphrodite (Venus), goddess of love, invoked here, recalls Botticelli's painting The Birth of Venus.*

SONG FOR ST. CECILIA'S DAY

**I**N a garden shady this holy lady  
With reverent cadence and subtle psalm,  
Like a black swan as death came on  
Poured forth her song in perfect calm:  
And by ocean's margin this innocent virgin  
Constructed an organ to enlarge her prayer,  
And notes tremendous from her great engine  
Thundered out on the Roman air.

Blonde Aphrodite rose up excited,  
Moved to delight by the melody,  
White as an orchid she rode quite naked  
In an oyster shell on top of the sea;  
At sounds so entrancing the angels dancing  
Came out of their trance into time again,  
And around the wicked in Hell's abysses  
The huge flame flickered and eased their pain.

*Blessed Cecilia, appear in visions  
To all musicians, appear and inspire:  
Translated Daughter, come down and startle  
Composing mortals with immortal fire.*

*The title of this poem is the name of a museum in Brussels where Breughel's painting The Fall of Icarus is permanently housed. The commentary in the poem is general until line 14. After that, all of the references are specifically concerned with this painting.*

MUSÉE DES BEAUX ARTS

ABOUT suffering they were never wrong,  
The Old Masters: how well they understood  
Its human position; how it takes place  
While someone else is eating or opening a window or just walking  
dully along;  
How, when the aged are reverently, passionately waiting  
For the miraculous birth, there always must be  
Children who did not specially want it to happen, skating  
On a pond at the edge of the wood:  
They never forgot  
That even the dreadful martyrdom must run its course  
Anyhow in a corner, some untidy spot  
Where the dogs go on with their doggy life, and the torturer's horse  
Scratches its innocent behind on a tree.  
In Breughel's *Icarus*, for instance: how everything turns away  
Quite leisurely from the disaster; the ploughman may  
Have heard the splash, the forsaken cry,  
But for him it was not an important failure; the sun shone  
As it had to on the white legs disappearing into the green  
Water; and the expensive delicate ship that must have seen  
Something amazing, a boy falling out of the sky,  
Had somewhere to get to and sailed calmly on.

As I walked out one evening,  
Walking down Bristol Street,  
The crowds upon the pavement  
Were fields of harvest wheat.

And down by the brimming river  
I heard a lover sing  
Under an arch of the railway:  
"Love has no ending.

I'll love you, dear, I'll love you  
Till China and Africa meet,  
And the river jumps over the mountain  
And the salmon sing in the street.

I'll love you till the ocean  
Is folded and hung up to dry,  
And the seven stars go squawking  
Like geese about the sky.

The years shall run like rabbits,  
For in my arms I hold  
The Flower of the Ages,  
And the first love of the world."

But all the clocks in the city  
Began to whirr and chime:  
"O let not Time deceive you,  
You cannot conquer Time.

In the burrows of the Nightmare  
Where Justice naked is,  
Time watches from the shadow  
And coughs when you would kiss.

In headaches and in worry  
Vaguely life leaks away,  
And Time will have his fancy  
Tomorrow or today.

Into many a green valley  
Drifts the appalling snow;  
Time breaks the threaded dances  
And the diver's brilliant bow.

O plunge your hands in water,  
Plunge them in up to the wrist;  
Stare, stare in the basin  
And wonder what you've missed.

The glacier knocks in the cupboard,  
The desert sighs in the bed,  
And the crack in the tea-cup opens  
A lane to the land of the dead.

Where the beggars raffle the banknotes  
And the Giant is enchanting to Jack,  
And the Lily-white Boy is a Roarer,  
And Jill goes down on her back.

O look, look in the mirror,  
O look in your distress;  
Life remains a blessing  
Although you cannot bless.

O stand, stand at the window  
As the tears scald and start;  
You shall love your crooked neighbor  
With your crooked heart."

It was late, late in the evening,  
The lovers they were gone;  
The clocks had ceased their chiming,  
And the deep river ran on.



**ROBERT BAGG**, born September 21, 1935, in Orange, New Jersey, lives with his wife and their four children in Seattle where he is a member of the English department of the University of Washington. He was graduated from Amherst College in 1957 and then spent a year in Cap d'Antibes, France, and another in Italy as winner of the Prix de Rome before entering upon graduate work at the University of Connecticut. He is the adaptor and narrator of a short film, *Siege of the Summerhouse*, based on his poem of the same title.



**I**NSCRIPTIONS on Greek tombstones intrigued him,  
 The way stones spoke to the dead with sure words.  
 'This little stone, good Sabinus, records  
 Our great friendship, which I still need. Leave the numb  
 Waters of Lethe alone, and remember me.'  
 Sometimes the dead answer, 'Please don't worry  
 Long over me. Do your work, be happy. At nineteen  
 Cancer killed me, and I leave the sweet sun.'

We both had strong Platonic appetites.  
 Three-pound symposiums of grapes and plums  
 Gnawed bare to their Aristotelian pits  
 He pocketed. 'Logic thrives on a peach blossom's  
 Troubles,' he said, and when a calm mirror  
 Lake reflected us, we dove underwater,  
 Blew out mouthfuls, and swam until the honey  
 Of exhaustion filled every cell in the body.

From a frame normally tense and careless  
 A tennis ball exacted gracefulness  
 By skipping on the tip of the net's tongue.  
 The dust kicked from our reflexes in long-  
 Winded rallies. Sharp satisfying plocks,  
 Both of us bent on keeping play alive,  
 We'd silence with a winning forehand drive,  
 Let sweat cool, and drink harsh gulps from our Cokes.

His death ten seconds in my ears, I shook  
 Off sorrow, walked out in a cool downpour  
 And drank rain from my palms. I had no power,  
 So thirsty for his slippery life, to make  
 Anything but absurdity of that bath.  
 I wandered Amherst in drenched shame

Because I had let weather drive the same  
Wonder from my feelings as a man's death.

This Spring, at Epidaurus, dying of poems,  
I stood tired and sweaty in a great cloudburst.

*Only for honest, singleminded thirst*  
*Will sense be made from the skies by cupped palms,*  
Said the acoustics in this theater, where  
Greek speech lives cupped in the worn marble's care.  
I shall drink many palmfuls of my friend's life  
In your presence, laurel and myrtle leaf;

Then set these stones speaking to each other.

'I am Ron Wyn, promising philosopher,  
I pledged myself to music, calculus  
And Greek, but mastered none, since my last promise,  
To death, was the one I fulfilled first.'  
'Rest easy, Ron. Although our friendship was killed  
To metaphor by the illiterate world  
I grave these rocks with love, in which you are versed.'



**GEORGE BARKER**, born February 26, 1913, in Loughton, Essex, lives on a farm in Haslemere, Surrey, with his wife and children. He attended no university, his sketchy formal education having been undertaken in short periods of study at the Marlborough Road School, in Chelsea, and the Regent Street Polytechnic. When he left school at the age of fourteen, he tried his hand at many jobs and was at one time a designer of wallpaper and at another a garage mechanic. Having made an impressive early reputation as a poet, he was appointed visiting professor of English literature at the Imperial Tohoku University in Japan in 1939, after which he came to the United States, remaining for four years before returning to England and ground service with the Royal Air Force. He has published three novels: *Alanna Autumnal*; *Janus*; *The Dead Seagull*.

*In the first sense, this sonnet is a completely personal poem; in a second, the poet's portrait of his mother is a statement in which the endurance and resurgent vitality of civilians during the bombing of London are regarded as monumental virtues.*

TO MY MOTHER

MOST near, most dear, most loved and most far,  
Under the window where I often found her  
Sitting as huge as Asia, seismic with laughter,  
Gin and chicken helpless in her Irish hand,  
Irresistible as Rabelais, but most tender for  
The lame dogs and hurt birds that surround her,—  
She is a procession no one can follow after  
But be like a little dog following a brass band.

She will not glance up at the bomber, or condescend  
To drop her gin and scuttle to a cellar,  
But lean on the mahogany table like a mountain  
Whom only faith can move, and so I send  
O all my faith, and all my love to tell her  
That she will move from mourning into morning.

*from* TO MY SON

*Part I*

MY darkling child the stars have obeyed  
In your deliverance and laid  
You cold on the doorstep of a house  
Where few are happy and times get worse.  
I will not gild your nativity

With a desirable lie, nor pity  
The birth that invests me with a second  
Heart on which I had not reckoned:  
No less than I do you will drink  
Cold comfort at a loveless brink,  
And when the wheel of mischance grazes  
You as you play I shall know pauses  
Of the skipping heart. Let the day, bending  
A bright hand about you, attend you  
Into the fatherless night when we  
Are each of us alone and at sea  
Without a North Star—but may  
The night seem safer the next day.  
The best of all is not to be born,  
But how can we tell this to the morning  
That, as we groan, comes up over the hill  
Of our midnight grief? I see you, still,  
An unbroken daybreak in my darkest  
Heart, destined to illuminate the stark  
Day of necessity in proper season.  
Why were you born? I love. This is the reason.  
But do not ask me why or whom—  
Does it much matter what prefix doom  
Wears to her name? She and I  
Shall always meet when all wishes  
Under a dazzle of unpropitious  
But irresistible ascendencies  
Clasp each other because they freeze.  
I saw her face. Saw fate had taught her  
That she was an elected daughter  
And in obedience to the pull  
Of that which knows it is beautiful  
I moved towards her in the cold  
And fell into a moon. The golden

Undergrowth of her sex enmeshed  
The dying fugitive it refreshed  
For henceforward daily dying.  
Sucking blood a Venus, sighing,  
Toys her prey back into life:  
He rules her with the sexual knife  
That kills him. But all this  
Comes later, my dear son, and is  
Knowledge of a kind that seems  
Too bitter for the simple schemes  
Of a world in which the killer  
Neither hates nor loves the killed.  
Your bed is a kingdom where  
Tears pacify the dogs of despair  
And the cold sheets, getting warm,  
Protect you all night long from harm.  
My bed is made. I lie on love  
Like dynamos. The rub and shove  
Turn generations on their way.  
We weep as we embrace and die.  
When the normal day begins  
We, rising, step out of our sins  
Not even smiling. The monsters settle  
Back into their sleeping metal.  
My dear son, you rode down on  
The spinal throes of a mastodon  
One quiet night in May. I bare  
That hour because I do not dare  
Let flesh grow over it. Your own  
Heartburst, one day, like a cyst,  
Will fester so, if you desist  
From speech. The tongue is a bird  
Where the worm, in the heart interred,  
Can be caught by no other. Let him, ringing

Lark of the bloodiest field, bring  
The overworn heart relief. I write  
These lines in a train on a night  
You sleep away in Ireland. Do not stir.  
I would not have my unpleasanter  
Thoughts disturb you. It is late.  
The moon stares down, dispassionate  
As the world stares up at her.  
All things are lost in genera.  
The train crawls on. The coast creeps near.  
The rain has started. And the year  
Is almost ended. I have been  
Too long away from my domain:  
Too much pursued my own will o'  
The whips against a stranger pillow,  
Too many seas of wounds sailed over  
To think that destinations cover  
The running sore of separation.  
I, like the train, must learn my station  
And stop a while there. Let me hide  
My restlessness at your bedside,  
Where, my dear son, you keep  
Four better guardians of your sleep.



**JOHN BERRYMAN**, *born October 25, 1914, in McAlester, Oklahoma, lives in Minneapolis, where he teaches in the English department of the University of Minnesota. He was educated at Columbia and at Clare College, Cambridge, and has taught at Wayne University and at Princeton. He is the author of a critical biography of Stephen Crane and of one of the few highly regarded long poems recently written in America, Homage to Mistress Bradstreet.*



*The pictorial subject of this poem is the  
painting Hunters in the Snow, by Breughel.  
Every image in the poem is a transcription of  
its counterpart in the painting.*

WINTER LANDSCAPE

THE three men coming down the winter hill  
In brown, with tall poles and a pack of hounds  
At heel, through the arrangement of the trees,  
Past the five figures at the burning straw,  
Returning cold and silent to their town,  
  
Returning to the drifted snow, the rink  
Lively with children, to the older men,  
The long companions they can never reach,  
The blue light, men with ladders, by the church  
The sledge and shadow in the twilit street,  
  
Are not aware that in the sandy time  
To come, the evil waste of history  
Outstretched, they will be seen upon the brow  
Of that same hill: when all their company  
Will have been irrecoverably lost,  
  
These men, this particular three in brown  
Witnessed by birds will keep the scene and say  
By their configuration with the trees,  
The small bridge, the red houses and the fire,  
What place, what time, what morning occasion  
  
Sent them into the wood, a pack of hounds  
At heel and the tall poles upon their shoulders,  
Thence to return as now we see them and  
Ankle-deep in snow down the winter hill  
Descend, while three birds watch and the fourth flies.

**JOHN BETJEMAN,**  
*born 1906, in England, lives in the Smithfield market district of London and in Wantage, Berkshire. He is married and has a son and a daughter. Educated at Marlborough and at Oxford, he was British Press Attaché in Dublin from 1941 to 1943 and, in 1944, held a post in the British Admiralty. Although he has for many years written poems and is well known as an expert on architecture, particularly Victorian, his wide fame in England did not arrive until the publication of his Collected Poems, which became one of the best selling volumes of verse since Byron. In recent years he has gained a wide popular reputation through appearances on British television channels. He is pictured here dressed in clothes that once belonged to Henry James.*



MISS J. Hunter Dunn, Miss J. Hunter Dunn,  
 Furnish'd and burnish'd by Aldershot sun,  
 What strenuous singles we played after tea,  
 We in the tournament—you against me!

Love-thirty, love-forty, oh! weakness of joy,  
 The speed of a swallow, the grace of a boy,  
 With carefulest carelessness, gaily you won,  
 I am weak from your loveliness, Joan Hunter Dunn.

Miss Joan Hunter Dunn, Miss Joan Hunter Dunn,  
 How mad I am, sad I am, glad that you won.  
 The warm-handled racket is back in its press,  
 But my shock-headed victor, she loves me no less.

Her father's euonymus shines as we walk,  
 And swing past the summer-house, buried in talk,  
 And cool the verandah that welcomes us in  
 To the six-o'clock news and a lime-juice and gin.

The scent of the conifers, sound of the bath,  
 The view from my bedroom of moss-dappled path,  
 As I struggle with double-end evening tie,  
 For we dance at the Golf Club, my victor and I.

On the floor of her bedroom lie blazer and shorts  
 And the cream-coloured walls are be-trophied with sports,  
 And westering, questioning settles the sun  
 On your low-leaded window, Miss Joan Hunter Dunn.

The Hillman is waiting, the light's in the hall,  
 The pictures of Egypt are bright on the wall,  
 My sweet, I am standing beside the oak stair  
 And there on the landing's the light on your hair.

By roads "not adopted", by woodland ways,  
She drove to the club in the late summer haze,  
Into nine-o'clock Camberley, heavy with bells  
And mushroomy, pine-woody, evergreen smells.

Miss Joan Hunter Dunn, Miss Joan Hunter Dunn,  
I can hear from the car-park the dance has begun.  
Oh! full Surrey twilight! importunate band!  
Oh! strongly adorable tennis-girl's hand!

Around us are Rovers and Austins afar,  
Above us, the intimate roof of the car,  
And here on my right is the girl of my choice,  
With the tilt of her nose and the chime of her voice,  
And the scent of her wrap, and the words never said,  
And the ominous, ominous dancing ahead.  
We sat in the car-park till twenty to one  
And now I'm engaged to Miss Joan Hunter Dunn.

#### YOUTH AND AGE ON BEAULIEU RIVER, HANTS

EARLY sun on Beaulieu water  
Lights the undersides of oaks,  
Clumps of leaves it floods and blanches,  
All transparent glow the branches  
Which the double sunlight soaks;  
To her craft on Beaulieu water  
Clemency the General's daughter  
Pulls across with even strokes.  
Schoolboy-sure she is this morning;  
Soon her sharpie's rigg'd and free.  
Cool beneath a garden awning  
Mrs. Fairclough, sipping tea

And raising large long-distance glasses  
As the little sharpie passes,  
Sighs our sailor girl to see:

Tulip figure, so appealing,  
Oval face, so serious-eyed,  
Tree-roots pass'd and muddy beaches.  
On to huge and lake-like reaches,  
Soft and sun-warm, see her glide—  
Slacks the slim young limbs revealing,  
Sun-brown arm the tiller feeling—  
With the wind and with the tide.

Evening light will bring the water,  
Day-long sun will burst the bud,  
Clemency, the General's daughter,  
Will return upon the flood.  
But the older woman only  
Knows the ebb-tide leaves her lonely  
With the shining fields of mud.

**ELIZABETH BISHOP**, born November 8, 1911, in Worcester, Massachusetts, lives in Brazil, where she spends summers in Rio de Janeiro and winters in the mountain resort town of Petropolis. As a child she lived for a number of years in Nova Scotia and later spent



much of her time in Key West. She was educated at Vassar College and has published a number of short stories and a translation, *Diary of Helena Morley*. The second of her two volumes of poetry, *A Cold Spring*, was awarded the Pulitzer Prize.

I  
IN your next letter I wish you'd say  
where you are going and what you are doing;  
how are the plays, and after the plays  
what other pleasures you're pursuing:

taking cabs in the middle of the night,  
driving as if to save your soul  
where the road goes round and round the park  
and the meter glares like a moral owl,

and the trees look so queer and green  
standing alone in big black caves  
and suddenly you're in a different place  
where everything seems to happen in waves,

and most of the jokes you just can't catch,  
like dirty words rubbed off a slate,  
and the songs are loud but somehow dim  
and it gets so terribly late,

and coming out of the brownstone house  
to the gray sidewalk, the watered street,  
one side of the buildings rises with the sun  
like a glistening field of wheat.

—Wheat, not oats, dear. I'm afraid  
if it's wheat it's none of your sowing,  
nevertheless I'd like to know  
what you are doing and where you are going.



A COLD SPRING

*For Jane Dewey. Maryland*

*Nothing is so beautiful as spring.*—Hopkins

A COLD spring:

the violet was flawed on the lawn.

For two weeks or more the trees hesitated;

the little leaves waited,

carefully indicating their characteristics.

Finally a grave green dust

settled over your big and aimless hills.

One day, in a chill white blast of sunshine,

on the side of one a calf was born.

The mother stopped lowing

and took a long time eating the after-birth,

a wretched flag,

but the calf got up promptly

and seemed inclined to feel gay.

The next day

was much warmer.

Greenish-white dogwood infiltrated the wood,

each petal burned, apparently, by a cigarette-butt;

and the blurred redbud stood

beside it, motionless, but almost more

like movement than any placeable color.

Four deer practised leaping over your fences.

The infant oak-leaves swung through the sober oak.

Song-sparrows were wound up for the summer,

and in the maple the complementary cardinal

cracked a whip, and the sleeper awoke,

stretching miles of green limbs from the south.

In his cap the lilacs whitened,

then one day they fell like snow.

Now, in the evening,  
a new moon comes.  
The hills grow softer. Tufts of long grass show  
where each cow-flop lies.  
The bull-frogs are sounding,  
slack strings plucked by heavy thumbs.  
Beneath the light, against your white front door,  
the smallest moths, like Chinese fans,  
flatten themselves, silver and silver-gilt  
over pale yellow, orange, or gray.  
Now, from the thick grass, the fireflies  
begin to rise:  
up, then down, then up again:  
lit on the ascending flight,  
drifting simultaneously to the same height,  
—exactly like the bubbles in champagne.  
—Later on they rise much higher.  
And your shadowy pastures will be able to offer  
these particular glowing tributes  
every evening now throughout the summer.

#### FLORIDA

**T**HE state with the prettiest name,  
the state that floats in brackish water,  
held together by mangrove roots  
that bear while living oysters in clusters,  
and when dead strew white swamps with skeletons,  
dotted as if bombarded, with green hummocks  
like ancient cannon-balls sprouting grass.  
The state full of long S-shaped birds, blue and white,  
and unseen hysterical birds who rush up the scale  
every time in a tantrum.

Tanagers embarrassed by their flashiness,  
and pelicans whose delight it is to clown;  
who coast for fun on the strong tidal currents  
in and out among the mangrove islands  
and stand on the sand-bars drying their damp gold wings  
on sun-lit evenings.

Enormous turtles, helpless and mild,  
die and leave their barnacled shells on the beaches,  
and their large white skulls with round eye-sockets  
twice the size of a man's.

The palm trees clatter in the stiff breeze  
like the bills of the pelicans. The tropical rain comes down  
to freshen the tide-looped strings of fading shells:  
Job's Tear, the Chinese Alphabet, the scarce Junonia,  
parti-colored pectins and Ladies' Ears,  
arranged as on a gray rag of rotted calico,  
the buried Indian Princess's skirt;  
with these the monotonous, endless, sagging coast-line  
is delicately ornamented.

Thirty or more buzzards are drifting down, down, down,  
over something they have spotted in the swamp,  
in circles like stirred up flakes of sediment  
sinking through water.

Smoke from woods-fires filters fine blue solvents.  
On stumps and dead trees the charring is like black velvet.  
The mosquitoes  
go hunting to the tune of their ferocious obbligatoros.  
After dark, the fire-flies map the heavens in the marsh  
until the moon rises.

Cold white, not bright, the moonlight is coarse-meshed,  
and the careless, corrupt state is all black specks  
too far apart, and ugly whites; the poorest  
post-card of itself.

After dark, the pools seem to have slipped away.

The alligator, who has five distinct calls:  
friendliness, love, mating, war, and a warning,  
whimpers and speaks in the throat  
of the Indian Princess.

## THE PRODIGAL

THE brown enormous odor he lived by  
was too close, with its breathing and thick hair,  
for him to judge. The floor was rotten; the sty  
was plastered halfway up with glass-smooth dung.  
Light-lashed, self-righteous, above moving snouts,  
the pigs' eyes followed him, a cheerful stare—  
even to the sow that always ate her young—  
till, sickening, he leaned to scratch her head.  
But sometimes mornings after drinking bouts  
(he hid the pints behind a two-by-four),  
the sunrise glazed the barnyard mud with red;  
the burning puddles seemed to reassure.  
And then he thought he almost might endure  
his exile yet another year or more.

But evenings the first star came to warn.  
The farmer whom he worked for came at dark  
to shut the cows and horses in the barn  
beneath their overhanging clouds of hay,  
with pitchforks, faint forked lightnings, catching light,  
safe and companionable as in the Ark.  
The pigs stuck out their little feet and snored.  
The lantern—like the sun, going away—  
laid on the mud a pacing aureole.

Carrying a bucket along a slimy board,  
he felt the bats' uncertain staggering flight,  
his shuddering insights, beyond his control,  
touching him. But it took him a long time  
finally to make his mind up to go home.



**LOUISE BOGAN**, *born August 11, 1897, in Livermore Falls, Maine, lives in New York City. She attended Boston Girls' Latin School and Boston University and then was married and, within a few years, widowed with one daughter. Her second husband was the poet Raymond Holden, from whom she was divorced in 1937. For more than twenty years she has been poetry critic for The New Yorker. She was Consultant in Poetry at the Library of Congress in 1945 and 1946; in 1954 her Collected Poems was awarded the Bollingen Prize.*

WOMEN have no wilderness in them,  
They are provident instead,  
Content in the tight hot cell of their hearts  
To eat dusty bread.

They do not see cattle cropping red winter grass,  
They do not hear  
Snow water going down under culverts  
Shallow and clear.

They wait, when they should turn to journeys,  
They stiffen, when they should bend.  
They use against themselves that benevolence  
To which no man is friend.

They cannot think of so many crops to a field  
Or of clean wood cleft by an axe.  
Their love is an eager meaninglessness  
Too tense, or too lax.

They hear in every whisper that speaks to them  
A shout and a cry.  
As like as not, when they take life over their door-sills  
They should let it go by.

*This poem was originally published with the subtitle  
"Imitated from Auden" and parodies the latter's  
tendency, particularly in his early poems, to make  
sociological observations in clinical terms and to  
view the world as an enormous hospital in  
which everyone is a patient.*

#### EVENING IN THE SANITARIUM

THE free evening fades, outside the windows fastened  
with decorative iron grilles.  
The lamps are lighted; the shades drawn; the nurses  
are watching a little.  
It is the hour of the complicated knitting on the safe  
bone needles; of the games of anagrams and bridge;  
The deadly game of chess; the book held up like a mask.  
  
The period of the wildest weeping, the fiercest delusion, is over.  
The women rest their tired half-healed hearts; they are  
almost well.  
Some of them will stay almost well always: the blunt-faced  
woman whose thinking dissolved  
Under academic discipline; the manic-depressive girl  
Now leveling off; one paranoiac afflicted with jealousy,  
Another with persecution. Some alleviation has been  
possible.  
  
O fortunate bride, who never again will become elated  
after childbirth!  
O lucky older wife, who has been cured of feeling  
unwanted!  
To the suburban railway station you will return, return,  
To meet forever Jim home on the 5:35.  
You will be again as normal and selfish and heartless as  
anybody else.



There is life left: the piano says it with its octave smile.  
The soft carpets pad the thump and splinter of the suicide  
to be.

Everything will be splendid: the grandmother will not  
drink habitually.

The fruit salad will bloom on the plate like a bouquet  
And the garden produce the blue-ribbon aquilegia.  
The cats will be glad; the fathers feel justified; the  
mothers relieved.

The sons and husbands will no longer need to pay the bills.  
Childhoods will be put away, the obscene nightmare abated.

At the ends of the corridors the baths are running.  
Mrs. C. again feels the shadow of the obsessive idea.  
Miss R. looks at the mantel-piece, which must mean something.



**PHILIP BOOTH**, born 1925, in New Hampshire, lives with his wife and three daughters in Syracuse, New York, and in a summer home on the shore of Penobscot Bay, in Maine. He was educated at Dartmouth, where he won a varsity letter as a member of the skiing team, and in World War II served as a pilot in the Air Force. He has taught at Bowdoin, Dartmouth, Wellesley, and Syracuse.

WHEN I was on Night Line,  
flying my hands to park  
a big-bird B-29,  
I used to command the dark:  
four engines were mine

to jazz; I was ground-crew,  
an unfledged pfc,  
but when I waved planes through  
that flight line in Tennessee,  
my yonder was wild blue.

Warming up, I was hot  
on the throttle, logging an hour  
of combat, I was the pilot  
who rogered the tower.  
I used to take off a lot.

With a flat-hat for furlough  
and tin wings to sleep on,  
I fueled my high-octane ego:  
I buzzed, I landed my jeep on  
the ramp, I flew low.

When a cross-country hop  
let down, I was the big deal  
who signaled big wheels to stop.  
That's how I used to feel.  
I used to get all revved up.

LIE back, daughter, let your head  
be tipped back in the cup of my hand.  
Gently, and I will hold you. Spread  
your arms wide, lie out on the stream  
and look high at the gulls. A dead-  
man's float is face down. You will dive  
and swim soon enough where this tidewater  
ebbs to the sea. Daughter, believe  
me, when you tire on the long thrash  
to your island, lie up, and survive.  
As you float now, where I held you  
and let go, remember when fear  
cramps your heart what I told you:  
lie gently and wide to the light-year  
stars, lie back, and the sea will hold you.

**JOHN MALCOLM**

**BRINNIN**, *born September 13, 1916, in Halifax, Nova Scotia, lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts. He was educated at the University of Michigan and at Harvard, taught at Vassar College for five years, was director of the Poetry Center of the YM-YWHA in New York City from 1950 to 1956, and now teaches at the University of Connecticut. Besides poetry, his books include the memoir Dylan Thomas in America and the biography The Third Rose: Gertrude Stein and Her World. He makes annual visits to Europe and lectures widely there and in the United States on American literature in general and modern poetry in particular.*



ANOTHER hill town:

another dry Cinzano in the sun.

I couldn't sleep in that enormous echo—  
silence and water music, sickly street lamps  
neither on nor off—a night  
of islands and forgotten languages.

Yet morning, marvellously frank, comes up  
with bells, with loaves, with letters  
distributed like gifts. I watch a fat priest  
spouting grape seeds, a family weeping  
in the fumes of a departing bus.

This place is nowhere  
but on the map. Wheels spin the sun,  
with a white clatter shutters are shut to,  
umbrellas bloom in striped and sudden groves.  
The day's away, impossibly the same,  
and only minutes are at all important—  
if women by a wall,  
a lean dog, and a cheerful humpback  
selling gum and ball-points  
are important. My glass is empty.  
It is Wednesday. It is not going to rain.

Observation

without speculation. How soon  
the eye craves what it cannot see,  
goes limpid, glazed, unanswerable,  
lights on a pigeon walking in a circle,  
hangs on a random shadow,  
would rather sleep.

How old am I?

What's missing here? What do these people  
feed on that won't feed on them? This town  
needs scrolls, celestial delegations,  
a swoon of virgins, apostles in apple green,  
a landscape riding on a holy shoulder.

The morning stays.

As though I kept an old appointment,  
I start by the cats' corridors (*Banco di Roma*,  
wineshops, gorgeous butcheries)  
toward some mild angel of annunciation—  
upstairs, most likely, badly lit,  
speaking in rivets on a band of gold.

Praise God, this town keeps one  
unheard-of masterpiece to justify  
a million ordinary mornings  
and pardon this one.

#### NUNS AT EVE

O<sub>N</sub> St. Martin's evening green  
Imaginary diamond, between  
The vestry buttress and the convent wall,  
Solemn as sea-birds in a sanctuary,  
Under the statue of the Virgin they play baseball.  
They are all named Mary,  
Sister Mary, Mary Anthony or Mary Rose,  
And when the softball flies  
In the shadow of the cross  
The little chaplet of the Virgin's hands  
Contains their soft excitements like a house.

A flying habit traces  
The unprecedented rounding of the bases  
By Sister Mary Agatha, who thanks God  
For the easy triple and turns her eyes toward home;  
As *Mary, Mother, help me* echoes in her head,  
Mild cries from the proud team  
Encourage her, and the obliging sun,  
Dazzling the pitcher's box  
With a last celestial light upon  
The gold-spiked halo of the Virgin in her niche,  
Leads Sister Mary John to a wild pitch.

Prayer wins the game.  
As Sister Mary Agatha comes sailing home  
Through infield dusk, like birds fan-wise  
In the vague cloisters of slow-rising mist,  
Winners and losers gather in to praise  
The fleetness of a bride of Christ.  
Flushed and humble, Agatha collects the bats  
And balls, while at her belt  
Catcher's and pitcher's mitts  
—Brute fingers, toes and gross lopsided heads—  
Fumble the ropes of her long swinging beads.



**JOHN CIARDI**, *born June 24, 1916, in Boston, lives with his wife and two children in Metuchen, New Jersey. He was educated at Bates College, Tufts College, and the University of Michigan and has taught at the University of Kansas City, Harvard, and Rutgers. During World War II he served in the Air Corps, flying many missions in the Pacific as an aerial gunner. He is an editor of the Saturday Review and a leading, sometimes controversial, spokesman for the dissemination and acceptance of the modern idiom in poetry.*



*In this context, kaput means done for and signalizes  
the end of the Nazi regime and the release of  
prisoners from its vast concentration camps, one  
of the most infamous of which was Dachau.*

## THE GIFT

**I**N 1945, when the keepers cried *kaput*,  
Josef Stein, poet, came out of Dachau  
like half a resurrection, his other  
eighty pounds still in their invisible grave.

Slowly then the mouth opened and first  
a broth, and then a medication, and then  
a diet, and all in time and the knitting mercies,  
the showing bones were buried back in flesh,

and the miracle was finished. Josef Stein,  
man and poet, rose, walked, and could even  
beget, and did, and died later of other causes  
only partly traceable to his first death.

He noted—with some surprise at first—  
that strangers could not tell he had died once.  
He returned to his post in the library, drank his beer,  
published three poems in a French magazine,

and was very kind to the son who at last was his.  
In the spent of one night he wrote three propositions:  
That Hell is the denial of the ordinary. That nothing lasts.  
That clean white paper waiting under a pen  
is the gift beyond history and hurt and heaven.

HERE lie Ciardi's pearly bones  
 In their ripe organic mess.  
 Jungle blown, his chromosomes  
 Breed to a new address.

Was it bullets or a wind  
 Or a rip-cord fouled on Chance?  
 Artifacts the natives find  
 Decorate them when they dance.

Here lies the sgt.'s mortal wreck  
 Lily spiked and termite kissed,  
 Spiders pendant from his neck  
 And a beetle on his wrist.

Bring the tic and southern flies  
 Where the land crabs run unmourning  
 Through a night of jungle skies  
 To a climeless morning.

And bring the chalked eraser here  
 Fresh from rubbing out his name.  
 Burn the crew-board for a bier.  
 (Also Colonel what's-his-name.)

Let no dice be stored and still.  
 Let no poker deck be torn.  
 But pour the smuggled rye until  
 The barracks threshold is outworn.

File the papers, pack the clothes,  
 Send the coded word through air—  
 "We regret and no one knows  
 Where the sgt. goes from here."

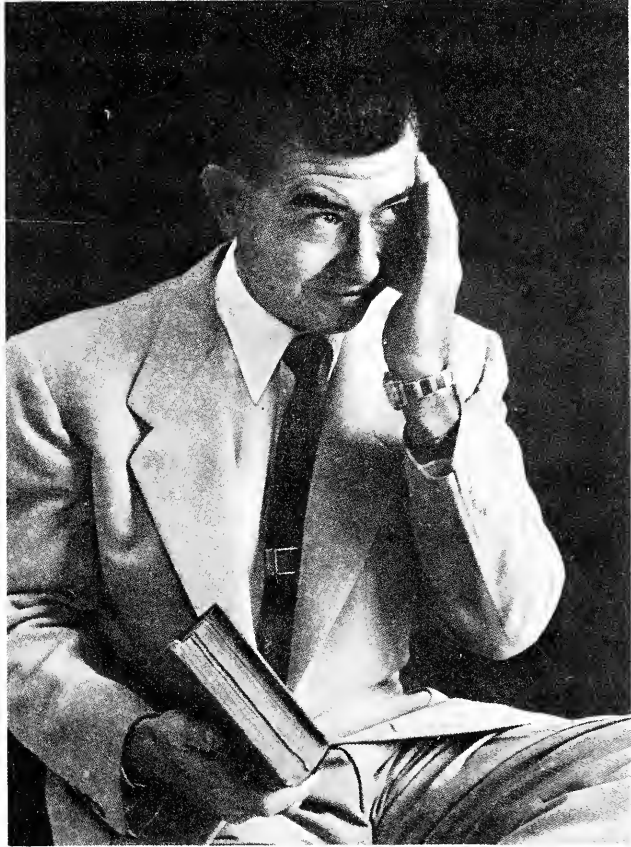
“Missing as of inst. oblige,  
Deepest sorrow and remain—”  
Shall I grin at persiflage?  
Could I have my skin again

Would I choose a business form  
Stilted mute as a giraffe,  
Or a pinstripe unicorn  
On a cashier’s epitaph?

Darling, darling, just in case  
Rivets fail or engines burn,  
I forget the time and place  
But your flesh was sweet to learn.

Swift and single as a shark  
I have seen you churn my sleep;  
Now if beetles hunt my dark  
What will beetles find to keep?

Fractured meat and open bone—  
Nothing single or surprised.  
Fragments of a written stone,  
Undeciphered but surmised.



**TRAM COMBS**, born September 25, 1924, in Riverview, Alabama, lives in St. Thomas, Virgin Islands, where he is an antiquarian bookseller specializing in literature and history of the Caribbean and Latin America. He studied physics at the University of California, meteorology at the University of Chicago, and did postgraduate work in electronic engineering at Harvard and MIT. Before moving permanently to St. Thomas in 1951, he lived in San Francisco, where he was associated with many of the writers who came into prominence with the "beat generation."

*The art of poetry as a means of worship is a familiar  
theme in literature. Here it is given a fresh re-  
statement by the use of phrases from the  
lingo of the beat generation.*

ARS POETICA ABOUT ULTIMATES

when you first rub up against God's own skin  
He turns out to be rougher than Christ's men most  
expect,  
like a wood-rat, -rasp or ravenous  
connoisseur with tender grapes a rough trade!  
yet this seduction and adoration  
of Him we must get done, dangerous  
though it go; poetry's ways're  
strewn with the early—de • railed, • ridden, • filed who  
heard its sirens; and rose to go  
singing, but couldn't make it, hammered  
and strove but with beats unsuccessful  
to get on to come on with  
the real jazz and sea for one's  
self, to reach follow •, fellow •, father •  
ship with Him!

AWARE AWARE

that corner of earth  
where I beat to death  
some dozen of those oozing creatures  
that feed on the garden's rottings  
haunts me

they, too, sentient, Buddha—like, felt  
and I hurt them

perhaps, though, it's the fresh un•life there  
I sense that troubles me;  
certainly my pangs to them were brief

cast here pyramidal we fleshed compete  
for space, to feed each on others greens ——  
our grace co-existence with mutual aid there-toward  
    (in dry summers Thoreau would  
    water the wood-land orchids.)  
and he's most graceful in the butchery  
who's most aware  
all's done there.

    in these matters in space of our meetings  
    we 'rive to acts below the mind's potential  
    visions.

animal cannibal creature born we strive to rise  
by our mind's unsettling  
lifts and ecstasies,  
struggles

    we re•vere to this  
    actuality we  
find ourselves apart in, unable to understand,  
but lift from our closes competing  
    wolf, ant, mouse;  
    and flesh—eaters will eat flesh ——  
thus to this race  
    in these our circuits temporary

JUST AFTER NOON WITH FIERCE SHEARS

just after noon with fierce shears  
I set to at the hibiscus trees,  
hacking away their under branches,  
for a tunnel to study the mornings in.  
then at the banked—up flower—beds ——  
withered iris out, down with vines dry for ten  
years ——  
sparing with care the life—lines of the daisies ——  
African, orange ——  
that plunge like comets from the spindling palm.  
what a litter on the slates' dark—green!  
rust cans, decay—gray'd paper, hunks of red brick,  
wilting leaves ——  
I lean against the wall and all's silent.  
and keeping the silence the lizards come —— one  
two three  
I see now, six, a dozen they crawl  
on the rotted wood chunks, run along walls;  
one springs to a vine and flows down it, another  
peers 'round a sphere of pink lace.  
the bared and dying all-ways of their world  
they stare at, walk over.  
once in a life  
such wonder.

I FLUNG UP MY ARM HALF FROM SLEEP

I flung up my arm half from sleep,  
my fingers dangled past the bed



— onto the dark house, minute  
slivers of stars down spheres of air're  
bounding and drifting gently to earth  
into the elephant ears' darkneses  
and waiting buds of hibiscus:  
the house !swirling, laced in them —  
past the bed's edge fingers fell  
and a soft rasp attached to them, a cat's tongue,  
file of love.

I drew back,  
and thought deliciously of the dark presences  
amorphous tiny  
two black kittens  
back of the couch  
in the next room  
with enormous blue eyes  
wondering  
stillnesses



**HILARY CORKE**, born July 12, 1921, in Malvern, England, lives with his wife, a granddaughter of Robert Bridges, and two young daughters at Abinger Hammer in a fifteenth-century house built on the site of a Roman market place. He was educated at Charterhouse and Christ Church, Oxford, and subsequently lectured in medieval English studies in Cairo and in Edinburgh. He is well known as a critic and reviewer and is a collector of rock crystal, ancient coins, Chinese artifacts, and sea shells.

I HAVE known one bound to a bed by wrist and ankle  
 Scarred by the whips of a wasting ache  
 Who at the point of entering of the needle  
 Looked once around to take  
 The final view, then spoke:  
 The echo of that terribly witty joke  
 Pursued the surgeon to his home in Kew,  
 Deafened a nurse all night and leaden lay  
 On the heart of a thick-skinned anaesthetist  
 Long after they'd dispatched his ended clay.

*That one lies in Oxford and is its earth.*  
 Also a bright-eyed woman in Germany  
 In a sightless trap far below ground  
 Of which another held the key  
 Surveyed without visible alarm  
 Or twitch of pinioned arm  
 The instruments set out upon a table:  
 Then from her mouth there flowed a resolute  
 Stream of satire deliciously edged until  
 The tormentor tormented stopped it with a boot.

*She fell as ash not bones in Herzen fields:*  
*All brave men breathe her when the wind*  
*Blows east from Danube.* And Tom Caine  
 When the *Imperial* was mined  
 And water had flooded all but the wireless-room  
 Spoke without audible gloom  
 From fifty fathoms down for fifteen hours  
 To his mess-mates on land, told several stories,  
 Then to a doctor carefully described  
 Asphyxiation's onset and his doom.

*He is grown water and surrounds the pole:  
If ever you dip a cup in any sea  
Tom Caine is in it somewhere. On the whole  
Men die asleep or else disgracefully;  
But not all men. Perhaps we are never  
By any average mountain wood or river  
More than a heart's-breadth from the dust  
Of one who laughed with nothing left to lose.  
Who saw the joke beneath the mammoth's foot?  
And what shall I choose, if I am free to choose?*

CALM WINTER SLEEP

SLEEP, calm winter sleep, the rides are woollen  
Over the dreaming roots, thick snow in sunlight  
Is sugar under the trees, wool or sugar,  
Immaculate, crystalline, soft. All night this has fallen:

All night, like flaws in the night, under a singing  
Steady moon, flutter of whirling frost-flakes  
Settling in light packed cumulus has drifted  
Into the copses, by the twig-sieves sifted.

We wake to this: from the bedroom window we see,  
Leaning flank by flank in pyjamas and nightgown,  
Its levelling laydown on the unregular earth;  
We speak of this coldness with our joined warm breath—

As distance instructs us we think of the seamless snow  
As a bride's dress hiding a rough brown secret body  
In sleep, calm winter sleep, before the firegroom  
Melts with one spring and lets her rivers go.

So distance says; but after oats and bacon,  
The children muffled, we venture and pass the wicket,

And how complicated the snow is, how alive a surface  
As through all the flamboyant frettings of the thicket

The weak pale arrows of St. Lucy's sun  
Yellow as an old apple strike in a brandished handful  
Defining a paving crazed with mysterious blue;  
With breezed shelving and with criss-crossed various

Other arrows of thrush-foot marking this mantle  
Fitter for convict than bride; and with giddy drip-holes  
Under the holly pointels, and deep in the bush  
The nap worn through already in umber stipples!

Last night we spoke of the Bomb, of the perilous statesmen,  
And those who shiver in tents, who are all our proper  
Concern; this morning we laugh and look into the snow.  
Have you forgotten your childhood that you grieve so?

Have you remembered your childhood that you grieve so?  
It is not to explore too closely the heart's motions  
Makes us quite wise: what dies is what's dissected.  
Only I know that sometimes when least expected

What must be happiness is suddenly found,  
Quite pointlessly, by following some small thing  
Like the linked arrows of a bird, unguessed-at  
In what from the window was one great trackless ground—

Though in the next night, under the silver eyeball  
Of the bathed night-mistress, out of the castled west  
The confetti's tourbillons again will bluster  
And lay our happiness waste-wide with the rest.

**E. E. CUMMINGS** *was born October 14, 1894, in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and, until his death in September, 1962, lived with his wife, the photographer and former fashion model Marion Morehouse, in Greenwich Village, New York City, and in Silver Lake, New Hampshire. He was educated at Harvard and in World War I served with the Norton Harjes Ambulance Corps in France, where, through an error on the part of a military censor, he was imprisoned in a detention camp for three months, an experience recorded in his famous book The Enormous Room. Some of his works beside poetry include the play Him; the unorthodox journal of a trip through the Soviet Union, Eimi; and the published text of talks delivered when he was the Charles Eliot Norton lecturer at Harvard in 1952, i: six nonlectures. Eccentricity of language, punctuation, and typography is the hallmark of his poetry, and in his "nonlectures" he reasserted his lifelong position as an iconoclast, an individualist, an enemy of systems and restriction and regimentation.*

nobody loses all the time

i had an uncle named  
Sol who was a born failure and  
nearly everybody said he should have gone  
into vaudeville perhaps because my Uncle Sol could  
sing McCann He Was A Diver on Xmas Eve like Hell Itself which  
may or may not account for the fact that my Uncle

Sol indulged in that possibly most inexcusable  
of all to use a highfalootin phrase  
luxuries that is or to  
wit farming and be  
it needlessly  
added

my Uncle Sol's farm  
failed because the chickens  
ate the vegetables so  
my Uncle Sol had a  
chicken farm till the  
skunks ate the chickens when

my Uncle Sol  
had a skunk farm but  
the skunks caught cold and  
died and so  
my Uncle Sol imitated the  
skunks in a subtle manner

or by drowning himself in the watertank  
but somebody who'd given my Uncle Sol a Victor  
Victrola and records while he lived presented to  
him upon the auspicious occasion of his decease a

scrumptious not to mention splendiferous funeral with  
tall boys in black gloves and flowers and everything and

i remember we all cried like the Missouri  
when my Uncle Sol's coffin lurched because  
somebody pressed a button  
(and down went  
my Uncle  
Sol

and started a worm farm)

*This poem, written in the sort of rhythm children  
naturally fall into when they are playing games or  
skipping rope, tells a very old and very simple story:  
two little people, "anyone" and "noone," meet, fall  
in love, marry, and die. These greatest of human  
events take place against the wheeling movements  
of the seasons and the stars, to which they are inti-  
mately related in life but completely anonymous in time.*

**a n y o n e   l i v e d   i n   a   p r e t t y   h o w   t o w n**

anyone lived in a pretty how town  
(with up so floating many bells down)  
spring summer autumn winter  
he sang his didn't he danced his did.

Women and men(both little and small)  
cared for anyone not at all  
they sowed their isn't they reaped their same  
sun moon stars rain

children guessed(but only a few  
and down they forgot as up they grew



autumn winter spring summer)  
that noone loved him more by more

when by now and tree by leaf  
she laughed his joy she cried his grief  
bird by snow and stir by still  
anyone's any was all to her

someones married their everyones  
laughed their cryings and did their dance  
(sleep wake hope and then)they  
said their nevers they slept their dream

stars rain sun moon  
(and only the snow can begin to explain  
how children are apt to forget to remember  
with up so floating many bells down)

one day anyone died i guess  
(and noone stooped to kiss his face)  
busy folk buried them side by side  
little by little and was by was

all by all and deep by deep  
and more by more they dream their sleep  
noone and anyone earth by april  
wish by spirit and if by yes.

Women and men(both dong and ding)  
summer autumn winter spring  
reaped their sowing and went their came  
sun moon stars rain

**somewhere i have never travelled,gladly beyond**

somewhere i have never travelled,gladly beyond  
any experience,your eyes have their silence:  
in your most frail gesture are things which enclose me,  
or which i cannot touch because they are too near

your slightest look easily will unclose me  
though i have closed myself as fingers,  
you open always petal by petal myself as Spring opens  
(touching skilfully,mysteriously)her first rose

or if your wish be to close me,i and  
my life will shut very beautifully,suddenly,  
as when the heart of this flower imagines  
the snow carefully everywhere descending;

nothing which we are to perceive in this world equals  
the power of your intense fragility:whose texture  
compels me with the colour of its countries,  
rendering death and forever with each breathing

(i do not know what it is about you that closes  
and opens;only something in me understands  
the voice of your eyes is deeper than all roses)  
nobody,not even the rain,has such small hands

**when serpents bargain for the right to squirm**

when serpents bargain for the right to squirm  
and the sun strikes to gain a living wage—  
when thorns regard their roses with alarm  
and rainbows are insured against old age

when every thrush may sing no new moon in  
if all screech-owls have not okayed his voice  
—and any wave signs on the dotted line  
or else an ocean is compelled to close

when the oak begs permission of the birch  
to make an acorn—valleys accuse their  
mountains of having altitude—and march  
denounces april as a saboteur

then we'll believe in that incredible  
unanimal mankind(and not until)



**ALAN DUGAN**, born February 12, 1923, in Brooklyn, New York, now lives in Manhattan with his wife, who is a daughter of the painter Ben Shahn. He is a graduate of Mexico City College and is employed as a model maker for a medical supply house. His first book, published in 1961, was the winner of the Yale Series of Younger Poets Award, the National Book Award, and the Pulitzer Prize, and brought him the chance to spend a year abroad as the winner of the Prix de Rome.

MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR THE INVASION BEACH  
WHERE THE VACATION IN THE FLESH IS OVER

I SEE that there it is on the beach. It is ahead of me and I walk toward it: its following vultures and contemptible dogs are with it, and I walk toward it. If, in the approach to it, I turn my back to it, then I walk backwards: I approach it as a limit. Even if I fall to hands and knees, I crawl to it. Backwards or forwards I approach it.

There is the land on one hand, rising, and the ocean on the other, falling away; what the sky does, I can not look to see, but it's around, as ever, all around.

The courteous vultures move away in groups like functionaries. The dogs circle and stare like working police. One wants a heel and gets it. I approach it, concentrating so on not approaching it, going so far away that when I get there I am sideways like the crab, too limited by carapace to say:

"Oh here I am arrived, all; yours today."

No: kneeling and facing away, I will fall over backwards in intensity of life and lie convulsed, downed struggling, sideways even, and should a vulture ask an eye as its aperitif, I grant it, glad for the moment wrestling by a horse whose belly has been hollowed from the rear, who's eyeless. The wild dog trapped in its ribs grins as it eats its way to freedom. Not

conquered outwardly, and after rising once,  
I fall away inside, and see the sky around  
rush out away into the vulture's crow  
and barely can not hear them calling, "Here's one."

## THE MIRROR PERILOUS

I GUESS there is a garden named  
"Garden of Love." If so, I'm in it:  
I am the guesser in the garden.  
There is a notice by the central pond  
that reads: "Property of Narcissus.  
Trespass at your own risk,"  
so I went there. That is where,  
having won but disdained a lady,  
he fell for his own face and died,  
rightly, "not having followed through,"  
as the sentence read, read by the lady:  
Oh you could hear her crying all about  
the wilderness and wickedness of law.  
I looked in that famous mirror perilous  
and it wasn't much: my own face,  
beautiful, and at the bottom,  
bone, a rusty knife, two beads,  
and something else I cannot name.  
I drank my own lips on the dare  
but could not drink the lips away.  
The water was heavy, cool, and clear,  
but did not quench. A lady laughed  
behind my back; I learned the worst:  
I could take it or leave it, go or stay,  
and went back to the office drunk,  
possessed of an echo but not a fate.

**RICHARD EBERHART**, *born April 5, 1904, in Austin, Minnesota, lives with his wife and two children in Hanover, New Hampshire, where he is professor of English at Dartmouth College. He studied at the University of Minnesota for two years, graduated from Dartmouth, and then continued his education at Cambridge, where he was a student of I. A. Richards, and later at*



*Harvard. In 1930 he spent a year as tutor to the son of King Prajadhipok of Siam. He has taught at St. Mark's School and, for short periods, at a number of American universities, including Washington, Connecticut, and Princeton. During World War II he served in the Navy and was a lieutenant commander at the time of his discharge. From 1959 to 1961 he was Consultant in Poetry at the Library of Congress.*

NATURE had made them hide in crevices,  
Two wasps so cold they looked like bark.  
Why I do not know, but I took them  
And I put them  
In a metal pan, both day and dark.

Like God touching his finger to Adam  
I felt, and thought of Michaelangelo,  
For whenever I breathed on them,  
The slightest breath,  
They leaped, and preened as if to go.

My breath controlled them always quite.  
More sensitive than electric sparks  
They came into life  
Or they withdrew to ice,  
While I watched, suspending remarks.

Then one in a blind career got out,  
And fell to the kitchen floor. I  
Crushed him with my cold ski boot,  
By accident. The other  
Had not the wit to try or die.

And so the other is still my pet.  
The moral of this is plain.  
But I will shirk it.  
You will not like it. And  
God does not live to explain.



You would think the fury of aerial bombardment  
Would rouse God to relent; the infinite spaces  
Are still silent. He looks on shock-pried faces.  
History, even, does not know what is meant.

You would feel that after so many centuries  
God would give man to repent; yet he can kill  
As Cain could, but with multitudinous will,  
No farther advanced than in his ancient furies.

Was man made stupid to see his own stupidity?  
Is God by definition indifferent, beyond us all?  
Is the eternal truth man's fighting soul  
Wherein the Beast ravens in his own avidity?

Of Van Wettering I speak, and Averill,  
Names on a list, whose faces I do not recall  
But they are gone to early death, who late in school  
Distinguished the belt feed lever from the belt holding pawl.



**T. S. ELIOT**, born September 26, 1888, in St. Louis, Missouri, lives with his second wife in London, where for many years he has been a director of the publishing house Faber and Faber, Ltd. He was educated at Milton Academy, Harvard, the Sorbonne, and Merton College, Oxford, and has lived in England since World War I. He became a British subject in 1927. His eminence as a poet is internationally recognized, and as a critic he has been a leading shaper of taste in literature. The range of his work encompasses both epic poetry—*The Waste Land*—and doggerel verse—*Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats*—and he is the only modern poet to have achieved wide public success in the field of poetic drama, notably with *The Cocktail Party* and *Murder in the Cathedral*. He makes frequent trips to the United States, on each of which he gives a limited number of public readings. At a recent appearance at the University of Minnesota he drew more people to hear him, it was noted, than any poet since Sophocles. He was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1948.

## I

THE winter evening settles down  
 With smell of steaks in passageways.  
 Six o'clock.  
 The burnt-out ends of smoky days.  
 And now a gusty shower wraps  
 The grimy scraps  
 Of withered leaves about your feet  
 And newspapers from vacant lots;  
 The showers beat  
 On broken blinds and chimney-pots,  
 And at the corner of the street  
 A lonely cab-horse steams and stamps.  
 And then the lighting of the lamps.

## II

The morning comes to consciousness  
 Of faint stale smells of beer  
 From the sawdust-trampled street  
 With all its muddy feet that press  
 To early coffee-stands.  
 With the other masquerades  
 That time resumes,  
 One thinks of all the hands  
 That are raising dingy shades  
 In a thousand furnished rooms.

## III

You tossed a blanket from the bed,  
 You lay upon your back, and waited;  
 You dozed, and watched the night revealing  
 The thousand sordid images  
 Of which your soul was constituted;

They flickered against the ceiling.  
And when all the world came back  
And the light crept up between the shutters  
And you heard the sparrows in the gutters,  
You had such a vision of the street  
As the street hardly understands;  
Sitting along the bed's edge, where  
You curled the papers from your hair,  
Or clasped the yellow soles of feet  
In the palms of both soiled hands.

#### IV

His soul stretched tight across the skies  
That fade behind a city block,  
Or trampled by insistent feet  
At four and five and six o'clock;  
And short square fingers stuffing pipes,  
And evening newspapers, and eyes  
Assured of certain certainties,  
The conscience of a blackened street  
Impatient to assume the world.

I am moved by fancies that are curled  
Around these images, and cling:  
The notion of some infinitely gentle  
Infinitely suffering thing.

Wipe your hand across your mouth, and laugh;  
The worlds revolve like ancient women  
Gathering fuel in vacant lots.

*The epigraph to this poem may be translated thus: "If I thought that my reply would be to one who would ever return to the world, this flame would stay without further movement; but since none has ever returned alive from this depth, if what I hear is true, I answer you without fear of infamy" (Dante, Inferno, XXVII, 61-66). These are the words spoken to Dante by Guido da Montelfeltro, who is shut up in his flame as punishment for having been a false counselor. He tells of his evil doings because he thinks that Dante, like himself, is doomed never to return to earth. The speaker of this dramatic monologue is an acutely sensitive and self-conscious man who feels out of place in the only society he knows. He details the triviality of his existence, sees himself in various dramatic attitudes, all of which he realizes are absurd, and finally invokes a fantasy world of beauty and simplicity—a world from which he is kept by the intrusions of reality.*

#### THE LOVE SONG OF J. ALFRED PRUFROCK

*S'io credesse che mia risposta fosse  
A persona che mai tornasse al mondo,  
Questa fiamma staria senza piu scosse.  
Ma perciocche giammai di questo fondo  
Non torno vivo alcun, s'i'odo il vero,  
Senza tema d'infamia ti rispondo.*

LET us go then, you and I,  
When the evening is spread out against the sky  
Like a patient etherised upon a table;  
Let us go, through certain half-deserted streets,  
The muttering retreats  
Of restless nights in one-night cheap hotels  
And sawdust restaurants with oyster-shells:  
Streets that follow like a tedious argument

Of insidious intent  
To lead you to an overwhelming question . . .  
Oh, do not ask, "What is it?"  
Let us go and make our visit.

In the room the women come and go  
Talking of Michelangelo.

The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window-panes,  
The yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the window-panes  
Licked its tongue into the corners of the evening,  
Lingered upon the pools that stand in drains,  
Let fall upon its back the soot that falls from chimneys,  
Slipped by the terrace, made a sudden leap,  
And seeing that it was a soft October night,  
Curled once about the house, and fell asleep.

And indeed there will be time  
For the yellow smoke that slides along the street,  
Rubbing its back upon the window-panes;  
There will be time, there will be time  
To prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet;  
There will be time to murder and create,  
And time for all the works and days of hands  
That lift and drop a question on your plate;  
Time for you and time for me,  
And time yet for a hundred indecisions,  
And for a hundred visions and revisions,  
Before the taking of a toast and tea.

In the room the women come and go  
Talking of Michelangelo.

And indeed there will be time  
To wonder, "Do I dare?" and, "Do I dare?"  
Time to turn back and descend the stair,  
With a bald spot in the middle of my hair—

[They will say: "How his hair is growing thin!"]  
My morning coat, my collar mounting firmly to the chin,  
My necktie rich and modest, but asserted by a simple pin—  
[They will say: "But how his arms and legs are thin!"]  
Do I dare  
Disturb the universe?  
In a minute there is time  
For decisions and revisions which a minute will reverse.

For I have known them all already, known them all:—  
Have known the evenings, mornings, afternoons,  
I have measured out my life with coffee spoons;  
I know the voices dying with a dying fall  
Beneath the music from a farther room.

So how should I presume?

And I have known the eyes already, known them all—  
The eyes that fix you in a formulated phrase,  
And when I am formulated, sprawling on a pin,  
When I am pinned and wriggling on the wall,  
Then how should I begin  
To spit out all the butt-ends of my days and ways?

And how should I presume?

And I have known the arms already, know them all—  
Arms that are braceleted and white and bare  
[But in the lamplight, downed with light brown hair!]  
Is it perfume from a dress  
That makes me so digress?  
Arms that lie along a table, or wrap about a shawl.

And should I then presume?

And how should I begin?

. . . . .

Shall I say, I have gone at dusk through narrow streets  
And watched the smoke that rises from the pipes



Of lonely men in shirt-sleeves, leaning out of windows? . . .

I should have been a pair of ragged claws  
Scuttling across the floors of silent seas.

. . . . .

And the afternoon, the evening, sleeps so peacefully!  
Smoothed by long fingers,  
Asleep . . . tired . . . or it malingers,  
Stretched on the floor, here beside you and me.  
Should I, after tea and cakes and ices,  
Have the strength to force the moment to its crisis?  
But though I have wept and fasted, wept and prayed,  
Though I have seen my head [grown slightly bald] brought in upon  
a platter,  
I am no prophet—and here's no great matter;  
I have seen the moment of my greatness flicker,  
And I have seen the eternal Footman hold my coat, and snicker,  
And in short, I was afraid.

And would it have been worth it, after all,  
After the cups, the marmalade, the tea,  
Among the porcelain, among some talk of you and me,  
Would it have been worth while,  
To have bitten off the matter with a smile,  
To have squeezed the universe into a ball  
To roll it toward some overwhelming question,  
To say: "I am Lazarus, come from the dead,  
Come back to tell you all, I shall tell you all"—  
If one, settling a pillow by her head,  
Should say: "That is not what I meant at all.  
That is not it, at all."

And would it have been worth it, after all,  
Would it have been worth while,  
After the sunsets and the dooryards and the sprinkled streets,

After the novels, after the teacups, after the skirts that trail along  
the floor—

And this, and so much more?—

It is impossible to say just what I mean!

But as if a magic lantern threw the nerves in patterns on a screen:

Would it have been worth while

If one, settling a pillow or throwing off a shawl,

And turning toward the window, should say:

“That is not it at all,

That is not what I meant, at all.”

. . . . .

No! I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be;

Am an attendant lord, one that will do

To swell a progress, start a scene or two,

Advise the prince; no doubt, an easy tool,

Deferential, glad to be of use,

Politic, cautious, and meticulous;

Full of high sentence, but a bit obtuse;

At times, indeed, almost ridiculous—

Almost, at times, the Fool.

I grow old . . . I grow old . . .

I shall wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled.

Shall I part my hair behind? Do I dare to eat a peach?

I shall wear white flannel trousers, and walk upon the beach.

I have heard the mermaids singing, each to each.

I do not think that they will sing to me.

I have seen them riding seaward on the waves

Combing the white hair of the waves blown back

When the wind blows the water white and black.

We have lingered in the chambers of the sea

By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown

Till human voices wake us, and we drown.

*As in the case of many likenesses made by painters,  
this portrait tells more about the artist than  
it does about the subject. The young man who is  
involved in an ambiguous relationship with an older  
woman at first feels superior to her and her obvious  
romantic pretensions. However, as he continues to  
see her through the course of a year, his attitude  
toward her undergoes a change: she may be foolish  
and hopelessly romantic, but his own character is not  
sufficiently resolved to allow him to maintain the  
smugness that marked their earlier encounters. As  
the epigraph suggests, he would like to feel that this  
episode is over and done with; but uncertainty plagues  
him. He has done a kind of violence to a woman  
and begins to suspect that his unresolved emotions  
are as damaging to himself as they have been to her.*

PORTRAIT OF A LADY

*Thou hast committed—  
Fornication: but that was in another country,  
And besides, the wench is dead.*

THE JEW OF MALTA.

I

AMONG the smoke and fog of a December afternoon  
You have the scene arrange itself—as it will seem to do—  
With “I have saved this afternoon for you”;  
And four wax candles in the darkened room,  
Four rings of light upon the ceiling overhead,  
An atmosphere of Juliet’s tomb  
Prepared for all the things to be said, or left unsaid.  
We have been, let us say, to hear the latest Pole  
Transmit the Preludes, through his hair and fingertips.  
“So intimate, this Chopin, that I think his soul  
Should be resurrected only among friends

Some two or three, who will not touch the bloom  
That is rubbed and questioned in the concert room.”  
—And so the conversation slips  
Among velleities and carefully caught regrets  
Through attenuated tones of violins  
Mingled with remote cornets  
And begins.  
“You do not know how much they mean to me, my friends,  
And how, how rare and strange it is, to find  
In a life composed so much, so much of odds and ends,  
[For indeed I do not love it . . . you knew? you are not blind!  
How keen you are!]  
To find a friend who has these qualities,  
Who has, and gives  
Those qualities upon which friendship lives.  
How much it means that I say this to you—  
Without these friendships—life, what *cauchemar*!”

Among the windings of the violins  
And the ariettes  
Of cracked cornets  
Inside my brain a dull tom-tom begins  
Absurdly hammering a prelude of its own,  
Capricious monotone  
That is at least one definite “false note.”  
—Let us take the air, in a tobacco trance,  
Admire the monuments,  
Discuss the late events,  
Correct our watches by the public clocks.  
Then sit for half an hour and drink our bocks.

## II

Now that lilacs are in bloom  
She has a bowl of lilacs in her room  
And twists one in her fingers while she talks.

“Ah, my friend, you do not know, you do not know  
What life is, you who hold it in your hands”;  
(Slowly twisting the lilac stalks)  
“You let it flow from you, you let it flow,  
And youth is cruel, and has no remorse  
And smiles at situations which it cannot see.”  
I smile, of course,  
And go on drinking tea.  
“Yet with these April sunsets, that somehow recall  
My buried life, and Paris in the Spring,  
I feel immeasurably at peace, and find the world  
To be wonderful and youthful, after all.”

The voice returns like the insistent out-of-tune  
Of a broken violin on an August afternoon:  
“I am always sure that you understand  
My feelings, always sure that you feel,  
Sure that across the gulf you reach your hand.

You are invulnerable, you have no Achilles' heel.  
You will go on, and when you have prevailed  
You can say: at this point many a one has failed.  
But what have I, but what have I, my friend,  
To give you, what can you receive from me?  
Only the friendship and the sympathy  
Of one about to reach her journey's end.

I shall sit here, serving tea to friends. . . .”

I take my hat: how can I make a cowardly amends  
For what she has said to me?  
You will see me any morning in the park  
Reading the comics and the sporting page.  
Particularly I remark  
An English countess goes upon the stage.  
A Greek was murdered at a Polish dance,

Another bank defaulter has confessed.  
I keep my countenance,  
I remain self-possessed  
Except when a street piano, mechanical and tired  
Reiterates some worn-out common song  
With the smell of hyacinths across the garden  
Recalling things that other people have desired.  
Are these ideas right or wrong?

### III

The October night comes down; returning as before  
Except for a slight sensation of being ill at ease  
I mount the stairs and turn the handle of the door  
And feel as if I had mounted on my hands and knees.  
“And so you are going abroad; and when do you return?  
But that’s a useless question.  
You hardly know when you are coming back,  
You will find so much to learn.”  
My smile falls heavily among the bric-à-brac.

“Perhaps you can write to me.”  
My self-possession flares up for a second;  
*This* is as I had reckoned.  
“I have been wondering frequently of late  
(But our beginnings never know our ends!)  
Why we have not developed into friends.”  
I feel like one who smiles, and turning shall remark  
Suddenly, his expression in a glass.  
My self-possession gutters; we are really in the dark.

“For everybody said so, all our friends,  
They all were sure our feelings would relate  
So closely! I myself can hardly understand.  
We must leave it now to fate.  
You will write, at any rate.

Perhaps it is not too late.  
I shall sit here, serving tea to friends."

And I must borrow every changing shape  
To find expression . . . dance, dance  
Like a dancing bear,  
Cry like a parrot, chatter like an ape.  
Let us take the air, in a tobacco trance—

Well! and what if she should die some afternoon,  
Afternoon grey and smoky, evening yellow and rose;  
Should die and leave me sitting pen in hand  
With the smoke coming down above the housetops;  
Doubtful, for a while  
Not knowing what to feel or if I understand  
Or whether wise or foolish, tardy or too soon . . .  
Would she not have the advantage, after all?  
This music is successful with a "dying fall"  
Now that we talk of dying—  
And should I have the right to smile?

*Long after the event, one of the three wise men who  
journeyed to the place of Christ's birth here  
recalls his long trek from the East and meditates  
upon the meaning of that experience.*

#### JOURNEY OF THE MAGI

'A COLD coming we had of it,  
Just the worst time of the year  
For a journey, and such a long journey:  
The ways deep and the weather sharp,  
The very dead of winter.'

And the camels galled, sore-footed, refractory,  
Lying down in the melting snow.  
There were times we regretted  
The summer palaces on slopes, the terraces,  
And the silken girls bringing sherbet.  
Then the camel men cursing and grumbling  
And running away, and wanting their liquor and women,  
And the night-fires going out, and the lack of shelters.  
And the cities hostile and the towns unfriendly  
And the villages dirty and charging high prices:  
A hard time we had of it.  
At the end we preferred to travel all night,  
Sleeping in snatches,  
With the voices singing in our ears, saying  
That this was all folly.

Then at dawn we came down to a temperate valley,  
Wet, below the snow line, smelling of vegetation;  
With a running stream and a water-mill beating the darkness,  
And three trees on the low sky,  
And an old white horse galloped away in the meadow.  
Then we came to a tavern with vine-leaves over the lintel,  
Six hands at an open door dicing for pieces of silver,  
And feet kicking the empty wine-skins.  
But there was no information, and so we continued  
And arrived at evening, not a moment too soon  
Finding the place; it was (you may say) satisfactory.

All this was a long time ago, I remember,  
And I would do it again, but set down  
This set down  
This: were we led all that way for  
Birth or Death? There was a Birth, certainly,  
We had evidence and no doubt. I had seen birth and death,  
But had thought they were different; this Birth was



Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death.  
We returned to our places, these Kingdoms,  
But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation,  
With an alien people clutching their gods.  
I should be glad of another death.



**D. J. ENRIGHT**, born March 11, 1920, in Leamington, Warwickshire, lives with his wife and daughter in Singapore, where he teaches at the University of Malaya. He was educated at Leamington College and Downing College, Cambridge, and then took teaching assignments in England, Egypt, Japan, Germany, and Thailand before assuming his present post.

FOR him, it seems, everything was molten. Court-ladies flow in gentle streams,

Or, gathering lotus, strain sideways from their curving boat,  
A donkey prances, or a kite dances in the sky, or soars like sacrificial smoke.

All is flux: waters fall and leap, and bridges leap and fall.  
Even his Tortoise undulates, and his Spring Hat is lively as a pool of fish.

All he ever saw was sea: a sea of marble splinters—  
Long bright fingers claw across his pages, fjords and islands and shattered trees—

And the Laughing Hyena, cavalier of evil, as volcanic as the rest:  
Elegant in a flowered gown, a face like a bomb-burst,  
Featured with fangs and built about a rigid laugh,  
Ever moving, like a pond's surface where a corpse has sunk.

Between the raised talons of the right hand rests an object—  
At rest, like a pale island in a savage sea—a child's head,  
Immobile, authentic, torn and bloody—  
The point of repose in the picture, the point of movement in us.

Terrible enough, this demon. Yet it is present and perfect,  
Firm as its horns, curling among its thick and handsome hair.  
I find it an honest visitant, even consoling, after all  
Those sententious phantoms, choked with rage and uncertainty,  
Who grimace from contemporary pages. It, at least,  
Knows exactly why it laughs.

*Players are British cigarettes; Akhenaton was a king  
of ancient Egypt who believed that the sun was  
god and god alone and attempted to found  
a new religion based on his belief.*

UNIVERSITY EXAMINATIONS IN EGYPT

THE air is thick with nerves and smoke: pens tremble in sweating hands:

Domestic police flit in and out, with smelling salts and aspirin:  
And servants, grave-faced but dirty, pace the aisles,  
With coffee, Players and Coca-Cola.

Was it like this in my day, at my place? Memory boggles  
Between the aggressive fly and curious ant—but did I really  
Pause in my painful flight to light a cigarette or swallow drugs?

The nervous eye, patrolling these hot unhappy victims,  
Flinches at the symptoms of a year's hard teaching—  
'Falstaff indulged in drinking and sexcess', and then,  
'Doolittle was a dusty man' and 'Dr. Jonson edited the Yellow Book.'

Culture and aspirin: the urgent diploma, the straining brain—all in  
the evening fall

To tric-trac in the café, to Hollywood in the picture-house:  
Behind, like tourist posters, the glamour of laws and committees,  
Wars for freedom, cheap textbooks, national aspirations—

And, farther still and very faint, the foreign ghost of happy Shakespeare,  
Keats who really loved things, Akhenaton who adored the Sun,  
And Goethe who never thought of Thought.



**IRVING FELDMAN**, *born September 22, 1928, in Coney Island, New York, lives with his wife and young son in Gambier, Ohio, where he teaches in the English department of Kenyon College. He was educated at the City College of New York and at Columbia University. Subsequently he taught at the University of Puerto Rico, in Rio Piedras and in Mayaguez, where he met his wife, and spent two years in France on a Fulbright fellowship.*

*Vitellozzo Vitelli, a nobleman who was murdered by  
Cesare Borgia in 1502, is here presented in circum-  
stances that reflect the whimsical, or predetermined,  
course of the fate of any man.*

THE DEATH OF VITELLOZZO VITELLI

VITELLI rides west toward Fano, the morning sun  
Has spread his shadow before him, his head is cast  
Upon the road beyond the horse, and now in vain  
He works his spurs and whip. For all his speed, his past  
Like a heavy wind has thrown his death far before  
Him, and not till midday shall he fill the waste  
Of light he has made with the goldness of his spur  
And the greenness of his cape. Then shall he stand  
At last by the bridge at Fano and know no more  
His way than the farmer at noon who looks from his land  
To his heart and knows not where next to turn his plow;  
Or lovers who have stayed abed and reach a hand  
And yet have turned away, even as they do so,  
To move their legs and sigh, wearied of their embrace  
—Yet nothing else seems worth their while. His road shall go  
Before him, having broken itself in two ways:  
One goes to Borgia in Fano, and one toward Rome.  
But his shadow hurries from his feet to his face.

FLOOD

THE first day it rained we were glad.  
How could we know? The heavy air  
Had lain about us like a scarf, though work

Got done. Everything seemed easier.

In the streets a little mud.

With the first faint drops, a tiny breeze

Trembled the cornsilk, and the frailest leaves

Turned on their stems this way and that.

Coming from the fields for lunch

I thought it my sweat.

On the second day streamlets ran

In the furrows; the plow stuck,

The oxen balked. On the third day

The rain ran from the roof like a sea.

I thought I would visit town.

Farmers from their farms, merchants from stores,

Laborers, we filled the town. I

Stayed with a cousin. We were told

The granary was full, we could live

A thousand days should the river rise impetuously.

The fifth day the clouds seemed hung

From the tops of the tallest trees. The sun

We did not see at all. And the rain

Beat down as if to crush the roof.

I did not shave or write my wife.

On the sixth day, we moved the women

And children to the town church, built

On the highest ground hard by the granary.

We finished work on the levee.

The river was thick with silt.

A dark drizzle started in my head.

Next day it trickled on the walls of my skull

Like black earth drifting down a grave.

We resolved to stay in the church come what will.

That day I did not leave my bed.

From where the rain? and why on us?  
Not even the wisest knows or dares guess.  
Did we not plan, care, save, toil,  
Did we lay idle or lust, did we waste or spoil?  
Therefore, why on us?

The husbandman from his flock,  
Husband from wife, the miser from his heap,  
The wise man from his wit, from her urn  
The widow—are tumbled all, as a man might knock  
The ashes from his pipe.

And the days descended in a stream,  
So fast they could not be told apart.  
In the church all went black.  
Once I lay with Lenah as in a dream.  
Another time I found myself at Adah's back.

If no one gets up at dawn to wind  
The clock, shall not the state run down?  
If no one gets up to go to the fields  
To feed the cows, to sow the wheat,  
To reap, how shall the state grow fat?

One comes telling us Noah has built a boat  
That through the flood he may ride about,  
And filled it all with animals.  
Just like the drunken fool, that slut-  
Chaser, to think of no one else.

I feed my friends and kin; twenty-nine thrived  
In my home. But mad Noah harangues the air  
Or goes muttering in his cuff  
As though a god were up his sleeve.  
Who is Noah to get saved?

I am a farmer, I love my wife,  
My sons are many and strong, my land is green.



This is my cousin, he lives in town,  
An honest man, he rises at dawn.  
We were children together.

Shall not the world run down?  
Why on us? Did we not plan?  
Does not black blood flow before my eyes  
And blackness brim inside my skull?  
Did we lie idle? Did we spoil?

Out of its harness the mind wild as a horse  
Roams the rooms and streets. There are some that say  
Noah sits amid the rude beasts in his ark  
And they feed one upon the other in the dark  
And in the dark they mate. And some say worse:

That a griffin was born, and centaur  
And sphinx hammer at the door.  
Groans and moans are heard, by some the roar  
Of giant Hippogriff. Still others cry  
That all about the earth is dry!

Dry as if no rain had fallen,  
As if we were not awaiting the swollen  
River, as if the clouds did not sit  
On our chimneys, or the waters  
Tumble past our windows in spate.

And some here say a dove has come,  
Sure, they think, the sign of a god.  
And others say that Noah walks the street  
Puffed with news. But bid him wait!  
We are busy with our flood.

**H**o! Persephone brings flowers, to them  
New styles in spring. In seven glittering  
Greys, under round grey hats of straw  
—Lo! to the fifing sun's tune  
The old men come on, stride, march,  
Drill, straight as the ties of lovers!  
(And their bones have drawn together  
In gentle communities of joints,  
Like weary soldiers dreaming head to head.)

Hup, they go, ho! in grey jackets,  
Grey shoes, sleek as boys, smiling,  
Striding on, the gay granite legions,  
Persephone's grooms, all together, raise  
Chins, link arms, step out, hiking, marching,  
Down down into the earth!



**ROBERT FITZGERALD**, born *October 12, 1910, in Geneva, New York*, lives with his wife and six children in Italy. He was educated at Choate, Harvard, and Trinity College, Cambridge, where he studied philosophy and classical languages. He once worked as a reporter on the New York Herald Tribune and for a number of years was a leading writer in several departments of Time. During World War II he was on the staff of the Commander in Chief, Pacific Ocean Areas, first at Pearl Harbor and later at Guam. His reputation is based not only on his own original work but on his widely praised and frequently performed translations, in collaboration with Dudley Fitts, of the Greek playwrights. He returned in 1961 to the United States for a visit when his translation of Homer's *Odyssey* was published.

## I

The newsvendor with his hut and crutch  
 And black palm polished by pennies  
 Chinked me swiftly my worn-out silver;  
 Then I went underground.

Many went down there,  
 Down blowing passages and dimness where  
 Rocketing cars were sucked out of sound in the tunnel.

A train came and expired, opening slots to us  
 All alacritous moving in voiceless numbers,  
 Haunch to haunch, elbow to hard elbow.

One would sleep, gaping and sagged in a corner,  
 One might wish for a seat by the girl yonder;  
 Each a-sway with his useless heavy headpiece.

## II

Tenements: "islands" in the ancient city.  
 Neither under the old law nor the new  
 Could any insulation make them gentle.

Here I retired, here I did lay me down—

Beyond the washing lines reeled in at evening,  
 Beyond the roofpots and the lightless skylights,  
 The elevated grated round a curve  
 To pick up pitch diminishing toward silence—  
 And took my ease amid that hardihood:  
 The virago at her sill obscenely screeching  
 Or the lutanist plucking away at "My Lady Greensleeves."

## III

The down beat, off beat, beat.  
 A hopped up drummer's perfect  
 Tocking periodicity and abandon.

Cush a cush cush a cush. Whang.  
Diddle di daddle di yup yup  
Whisper to me daddy. On the  
Down, the down beat, beat.

The spot's on blondie, see her croon,  
See that remarkable subtle pelvic  
Universal joint softly rolling.  
Honey take it sweet and slow,  
Honey, take your time.  
Roll those eyes and send, baby, send.

And swing it. O cats  
Express your joys and savoir faire  
You hot lick connoisseurs: shake  
A laig like New Orleans. Or

Rumba. O you Arthur Murray, O you Murray boys  
With your snappy steward jackets keeping young,  
Steer and sway, you accomplished dancers.  
Won't you come over to my table.  
Meet Rosemary. This is Rosemary.

#### IV

The manhole disks were prone shields of morning  
Where the sun greeted the avenue.  
O lumbering conveyances! O yellow  
Gliding of cabs, thousand-footed dimpling stir!  
The fresh net placed on the fair hair!

The steel shutters removed at Tiffany's  
And the doorman pulling his beige gloves on;

The elevator boy holding down his yawn  
And the cool engineer with his briefcase;

The sun striking over the void city room  
And the first hasteners through the concourse;

The riveter walking out on the flaking plank  
And the welder donning his goggles;  
The steel drawer sliding from the office file  
And the receptionist fixing her lipline;  
The towsled showgirl a-drool on the pillow  
And the schoolyard filling with cries;  
The roominghouse suicide at peace by the gasjet  
And the nun smiling across the ward—  
Against the shine of windows, visual  
Madness of intersecting multitudes,  
Their speech torn to bits in the torrent.

*The baseball immortal, Ty Cobb, died in 1961. In a  
kind of poetic shorthand, the poem attempts to  
catch the speech and rhythm of the national pastime  
without any sort of imposed comment.*

COBB WOULD HAVE CAUGHT IT

**I**N sunburnt parks where Sundays lie,  
Or the wide wastes beyond the cities,  
Teams in grey deploy through sunlight.  
Talk it up, boys, a little practice.  
Coming in stubby and fast, the baseman  
Gathers a grounder in fat green grass,  
Picks it stinging and clipped as wit  
Into the leather: a swinging step  
Wings it deadeye down to first.  
Smack. Oh, attaboy, attyoldboy.

Catcher reverses his cap, pulls down  
Sweaty casque, and squats in the dust:  
Pitcher rubs new ball on his pants,  
Chewing, puts a jet behind him;  
Nods past batter, taking his time.  
Batter settles, tugs at his cap:  
A spinning ball: step and swing to it,  
Caught like a cheek before it ducks  
By shivery hickory: socko, baby:  
Cleats dig into dust. Outfielder,  
On his way, looking over shoulder,  
Makes it a triple. A long peg home.  
  
Innings and afternoons. Fly lost in sunset.  
Throwing arm gone bad. There's your old ball game.  
Cool reek of the field. Reek of companions.

#### SOULS LAKE

**T**HE evergreen shadow and the pale magnolia  
Stripping slowly to the air of May  
Stood still in the night of the honey trees.  
At rest above a star pool with my friends,  
Beside that grove most fit for elegies,  
I made my phrase to out-enchant the night.

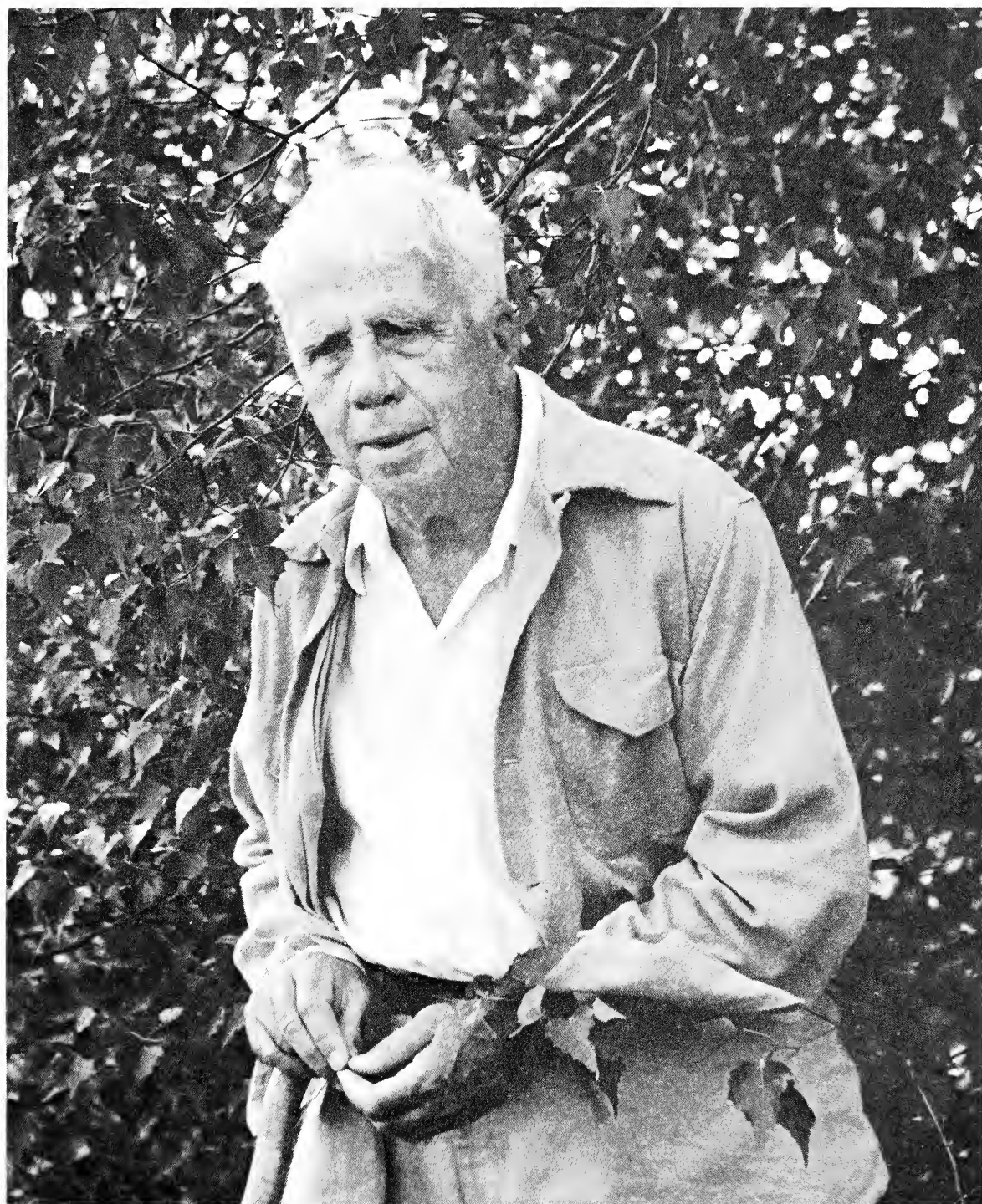
The epithalamion, the hush were due,  
For I had fasted and gone blind to see  
What night might be beyond our passages;  
Those stars so chevalier in fearful heaven  
Could not but lay their steel aside and come  
With a grave glitter into my low room.

Vague though the population of the earth  
Lay stretched and dry below the cypresses,  
It was not round-about but in my night,  
Bone of my bone, as an old man would say;  
And all its stone weighed my mortality;  
The pool would be my body and my eyes,

The air my garment and material  
Whereof that wateriness and mirror lived—  
The colorable, meek and limpid world.  
Though I had sworn my element alien  
To the pure mind of night, the cold princes,  
Behold them there, and both worlds were the same.

The heart's planet seemed not so lonely then,  
Seeing what kin it found in that reclining.  
And ah, though sweet the catch of your chorales,  
I heard no singing there among my friends;  
But still were the great waves, the lions shining,  
And infinite still the discourse of the night.





**ROBERT FROST**, born March 26, 1874,  
*in San Francisco, died in Boston*  
January 29, 1963. In the last decades of his  
life he made his home in Cambridge,  
Massachusetts, during the winter and on  
his farm in Ripton, Vermont, during the  
summer. He attended Dartmouth and Har-  
vard but took degrees from neither. After  
an early and unsuccessful career of farm-  
ing and intermittent school teaching, he  
went with his wife and young family to  
England in 1912, and there his first book,  
*A Boy's Will*, was published. He returned  
in 1915, his reputation as a poet already  
established. Honored by more awards  
and greater public favor than that  
granted to any other American poet, he  
has for many years lectured and read his  
poems throughout the United States. On  
March 24, 1950, the United States Senate  
unanimously adopted a resolution honor-  
ing him. His poems, according to the  
citation, ". . . have helped to guide  
American thought with humor, and wis-  
dom, setting forth to our minds a reliable  
representation of ourselves and of all  
men. . . ." In 1958 he went to England to  
receive honorary degrees from both Oxford  
and Cambridge. In 1961 he read his poem  
"*The Gift Outright*" as part of the cere-  
monies attending the inauguration of  
President John F. Kennedy.

## ACQUAINTED WITH THE NIGHT

I HAVE been one acquainted with the night.  
I have walked out in rain—and back in rain.  
I have outwalked the furthest city light.  
  
I have looked down the saddest city lane.  
I have passed by the watchman on his beat  
And dropped my eyes, unwilling to explain.  
  
I have stood still and stopped the sound of feet  
When far away an interrupted cry  
Came over houses from another street,  
  
But not to call me back or say good-bye;  
And further still at an unearthly height,  
One luminary clock against the sky  
  
Proclaimed the time was neither wrong nor right.  
I have been one acquainted with the night.

## STOPPING BY WOODS ON A SNOWY EVENING

WHOSE woods these are I think I know.  
His house is in the village though;  
He will not see me stopping here  
To watch his woods fill up with snow.  
  
My little horse must think it queer  
To stop without a farmhouse near  
Between the woods and frozen lake  
The darkest evening of the year.  
  
He gives his harness bells a shake  
To ask if there is some mistake.

The only other sound's the sweep  
Of easy wind and downy flake.

The woods are lovely, dark and deep.  
But I have promises to keep,  
And miles to go before I sleep,  
And miles to go before I sleep.

#### THE ROAD NOT TAKEN

**T**wo roads diverged in a yellow wood,  
And sorry I could not travel both  
And be one traveler, long I stood  
And looked down one as far as I could  
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,  
And having perhaps the better claim,  
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;  
Though as for that the passing there  
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay  
In leaves no step had trodden black.  
Oh, I kept the first for another day!  
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,  
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh  
Somewhere ages and ages hence:  
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference.

ONCE when the snow of the year was beginning to fall,  
 We stopped by a mountain pasture to say, 'Whose colt?'  
 A little Morgan had one forefoot on the wall,  
 The other curled at his breast. He dipped his head  
 And snorted at us. And then he had to bolt.  
 We heard the miniature thunder where he fled,  
 And we saw him, or thought we saw him, dim and grey,  
 Like a shadow against the curtain of falling flakes.  
 'I think the little fellow's afraid of the snow.  
 He isn't winter-broken. It isn't play  
 With the little fellow at all. He's running away.  
 I doubt if even his mother could tell him, "Sakes,  
 It's only weather." He'd think she didn't know!  
 Where is his mother? He can't be out alone.'  
 And now he comes again with clatter of stone,  
 And mounts the wall again with whited eyes  
 And all his tail that isn't hair up straight.  
 He shudders his coat as if to throw off flies.  
 'Whoever it is that leaves him out so late,  
 When other creatures have gone to stall and bin,  
 Ought to be told to come and take him in.'

## PROVIDE PROVIDE

THE witch that came (the withered hag)  
 To wash the steps with pail and rag,  
 Was once the beauty Abishag,  
 The picture pride of Hollywood.  
 Too many fall from great and good  
 For you to doubt the likelihood.

Die early and avoid the fate.  
Or if predestined to die late,  
Make up your mind to die in state.

Make the whole stock exchange your own!  
If need be occupy a throne,  
Where nobody can call *you* crone.

Some have relied on what they knew;  
Others on being simply true.  
What worked for them might work for you.

No memory of having starved  
Atones for later disregard,  
Or keeps the end from being hard.

Better to go down dignified  
With boughten friendship at your side  
Than none at all. Provide, provide!

*A tribute to the poet's wife, this poem, a sonnet, is remarkable, not only for the fact that the spiritual qualities of a woman are metaphorically seen in relation to the physical properties of a pitched tent on a summer's day, but for the technical mastery by which a fourteen-line poem is presented as one sentence.*

#### THE SILKEN TENT

SHE is as in a field a silken tent  
At midday when a sunny summer breeze  
Has dried the dew and all its ropes relent,  
So that in guys it gently sways at ease,

And its supporting central cedar pole,  
That is its pinnacle to heavenward  
And signifies the sureness of the soul,  
Seems to owe naught to any single cord,  
But strictly held by none, is loosely bound  
By countless silken ties of love and thought  
To everything on earth the compass round,  
And only by one's going slightly taut  
In the capriciousness of summer air  
Is of the slightest bondage made aware.

**JEAN GARRIGUE**, *born December 8, 1914, in Evansville, Indiana, lives in Greenwich Village, New York City. She graduated from the University of Chicago and during World War II edited a publication sheet for the USO. She then went to the University of Iowa to begin a teaching career that eventually included brief residences at Queens College, Bard College, and the University of Connecticut. After receiving a Guggenheim fellowship and an award from the National Academy of Arts and Letters in 1961, she went to Europe to continue work on her fifth volume of poetry.*





**W**HEN the mouse died at night  
 He was all overgrown with delight,  
 His whiskers thick as a wood  
 From exploring the Polar cupboard  
 And his eyes still agape  
 From risky accomplishment.  
 No honor or drum was his bait.  
 The more glorious, he  
 Who with no shame for time  
 Then boldly died,  
 Three weeks a rich spell  
 Of sound and pure smell  
 And all his long leisure  
 For meat of short measure  
 (An ant could carry it.)  
 Praise him who sweetens  
 On a small hate.

## THE STRANGER

**N**ow upon this piteous year  
 I sit in Denmark beside the quai  
 And nothing that the fishers say  
 Or the children carrying boats  
 Can recall me from that place  
 Where sense and wish departed me  
 Whose very shores take on  
 The whiteness of anon.  
 For I beheld a stranger there  
 Who moved ahead of me

So tensile and so dancer made  
That like a thief I followed her  
Though my heart was so alive  
I thought myself the equal beauty.  
But when at last a turning came  
Like the branching of a river  
And I saw if she walked on  
She would be gone forever,  
Fear, then, so wounded me  
As fell upon my ear  
The voice a blind man dreams  
And broke on me the smile  
I dreamed as deaf men hear,  
I stood there like a spy,  
My tongue and eyelids taken  
In such necessity.  
Now upon this piteous year  
The rains of Autumn fall.  
Where may she be?  
I suffered her to disappear  
Who hunger in the prison of my fear.  
That lean and brown, that stride,  
That cold and melting pride,  
For whom the river like a clear,  
Melodic line and the distant carrousel  
Where lovers on their beasts of play  
Rose and fell, that wayfare where the swan adorned  
With every wave and eddy  
The honor of his sexual beauty,  
Create her out of sorrow  
That, never perishing,  
Is a stately thing.

**W**E are large with pity, slow and awkward,  
 In the false country of the zoo.  
 For the beasts our hearts turn over and sigh.  
 With the gazelle we long to look eye to eye.  
 Laughter at the stumbling, southern giraffes  
 Urges our anger, righteous despair.  
 As the hartebeest plunges, giddy, eccentric,  
 From out of the courtyard into his stall,  
 We long to seize his forehead's steep horns  
 Which are like the staves of a lyre.  
 Fleeter than greyhounds the hartebeest  
 Long-muzzled, small-footed and shy.  
 Another runner, the emu, is even better  
 At kicking. Oh, the coarse chicken feet  
 Of this bird reputed a fossil!  
 His body, deep as a table,  
 Droops gracelessly downwise,  
 His small head shakes like an old woman's eye.  
 The emu, ostrich, the cassowary,  
 Continue to go on living their lives  
 In conditions unnatural to them  
 And in relations most strange,  
 Remain the same.  
 As for the secretary bird,  
 Snake-killer, he suggests  
 A mischievous bird-maker.  
 Like a long-legged boy in short pants  
 He runs teetering, legs far apart,  
 On his toes, part gasping girl.  
 What thought him up, this creature  
 Eminently equipped by his nervous habits  
 To kill venomous snakes with his strong,

Horny feet, first jumping on them,  
And then leaping away?  
At the reptile and monkey houses  
Crowds gather, to enjoy the ugly,  
But mock the kangaroo who walks like a cripple.

In the false country of the zoo  
Where Africa is well represented  
By Australia,  
The emu, the ostrich and the cassowary  
Survive like kings, poor antiquated strays,  
Deceased in all but vestiges  
Who did not have to change, preserved  
In their peculiarities by rifts,  
From emigration barred.  
Now melancholy, like old continents  
Unmodified and discontinued, they  
Survive by some discreet permission  
Like older souls too painfully handicapped.  
Running birds who cannot fly,  
Whose virtue is their liability,  
Whose stubborn, very resistance, is their sorrow.  
See, as they run, how we laugh  
At the primitive, relic procedure.

In the false country of the zoo  
Grief is well represented there  
From those continents of the odd  
And outmoded, Africa and Australia.  
Sensation is foremost at a zoo—  
The sensation of gaping at the particular:  
The striped and camouflaged,  
The bear, wallowing in his anger,  
The humid tiger wading in a pool.  
As for those imports

From Java and India,  
The pale, virginal peafowl,  
The stork, cracking his bill against a wall,  
The peacock, plumes up, though he walks as if weighted,  
—All that unconscionable tapestry—  
Till a wind blows the source of his pride  
And it becomes his embarrassment—  
The eye, plunged in sensation, closes.  
Thought seizes the image. This shrieking  
Jungle of spot, stripe, orange,  
Blurs. The oil from the deer's eye  
That streaks like a tear his cheek  
Seems like a tear, is, is,  
As our love and our pity are, are.



**DAVID GASCOYNE**, born October, 1916, in Harrow, Middlesex, England, lives in London. He was educated at Salisbury Cathedral Choir School and Regent Street Polytechnic. He lived for a number of years in France, where he wrote a book about surrealism, a movement which deeply influenced an important phase of his poetic career. In 1952 he spent several months in the United States.

FRIEND, whose unnatural early death  
In this year's cold, chaotic Spring  
Is like a clumsy wound that will not heal:  
What can I say to you, now that your ears  
Are stoppered-up with distant soil?  
Perhaps to speak at all is false; more true  
Simply to sit at times alone and dumb  
And with most pure intensity of thought  
And concentrated inmost feeling, reach  
Towards your shadow on the years' crumbling wall.

I'll say not any word in praise or blame  
Of what you ended with the mere turn of a tap;  
Nor to explain, deplore nor yet exploit  
The latent pathos of your living years—  
Hurried, confused and unfulfilled—  
That were the shiftless years of both our youths  
Spent in the monstrous mountain-shadow of  
*Catastrophe* that chilled you to the bone:  
The certain imminence of which always pursued  
You from your heritage of fields and sun . . .

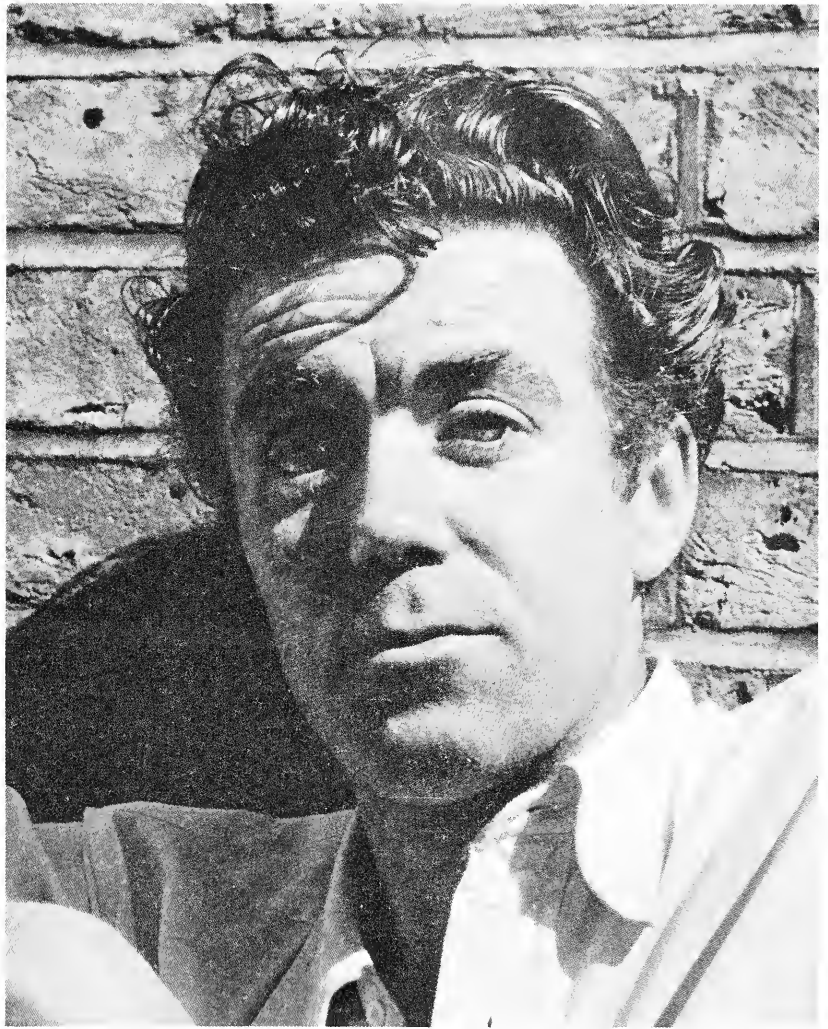
I see your face in hostile sunlight, eyes  
Wrinkled against its glare, behind the glass  
Of a car's windscreen, while you seek to lose  
Your self in swift devouring of white roads  
Unwinding across Europe or America;  
Taciturn at the wheel, wrapped in a blaze  
Of restlessness that no fresh scene can quench;  
In cities of brief sojourn that you pass  
Through in your quest for respite, heavy drink  
Alone enabling you to bear each hotel night.

Sex, Art and Politics: those poor  
Expedients! You tried them each in turn,  
With the wry inward smile of one resigned  
To join in every complicated game  
Adults affect to play. Yet girls you found  
So prone to sentiment's corruptions; and the joy  
Of sensual satisfaction seemed so brief, and left  
Only new need. It proved hard to remain  
Convinced of the Word's efficacy; or even quite  
Certain of World-Salvation through "the Party Line" . . .

Cased in the careful armour that you wore  
Of wit and nonchalance, through which  
Few quizzed the concealed countenance of fear,  
You waited daily for the sky to fall;  
At moments wholly panic-stricken by  
A sense of stifling in your brittle shell;  
Seeing the world's damnation week by week  
Grow more and more inevitable; till  
The conflagration broke out with a roar,  
And from those flames you fled through whirling smoke,

To end at last in bankrupt exile in  
That sordid city, scene of *Ulysses*; and there,  
While War sowed all the lands with violent graves,  
You finally succumbed to a black, wild  
Incomprehensibility of fate that none could share . . .  
Yet even in your obscure death I see  
The secret candour of that lonely child  
Who, lost in the storm-shaken castle-park,  
Astride his crippled mastiff's back was borne  
Slowly away into the utmost dark.





**W. S. GRAHAM**, born 1921, in Liverpool, of Scottish parentage, had little formal schooling. He spent his early years in the north of England working for a time as a structural engineer and then went to London, where his work was recognized by publication and reading appearances on the BBC. In 1948 and again in 1953 he came to America to give lectures and readings of his poems.

**L**ISTEN. Put on morning.  
 Waken into falling light.  
 A man's imagining  
 Suddenly may inherit  
 The handclapping centuries  
 Of his one minute on earth.  
 And hear the virgin juries  
 Talk with his own breath  
 To the corner boys of his street  
 And hear the Black Maria  
 Searching the town at night.  
 And hear the playropes caa  
 The sister Mary in.  
 And hear Willie and Davie  
 Among bracken of Narnain  
 Sing in a mist heavy  
 With myrtle and listeners.  
 And hear the higher town  
 Weep a petition of fears  
 At the poorhouse close upon  
 The public heartbeat.  
 And hear the children tig  
 And run with my own feet  
 'nto the netting drag  
 Of a suiciding principle.

Listen. Put on lightbreak.  
 Waken into miracle.  
 The audience lies awake  
 Under the tenements  
 Under the sugar docks  
 Under the printed moments.

The centuries turn their locks  
And open under the hill  
Their inherited books and doors  
All gathered to distill  
Like happy berry pickers  
One voice to talk to us.  
Yes listen. It carries away  
The second and the years  
Till the heart's in a jacket of snow  
And the head's in a helmet of white  
And the song sleeps to be wakened  
By the morning ear bright.  
Listen. Put on morning.  
Waken into falling light.

**ROBERT GRAVES**, *born July 24, 1895, in London, lives in Spain on the island of Majorca. His early career was identified with that of the "trench poets" of World War I, during which, as a member of the Royal Welch Fusiliers, he saw much action and was wounded. He later studied at Oxford and taught for a year at the University of Cairo.*



*He is one of the most prolific of contemporary authors, famous for his historical novels as well as for his critical essays, translations, and mythological studies, notably The White Goddess. In recent years he has made several visits to the United States to read his poems; in 1961 he was elected professor of poetry at Oxford, a position in which he succeeded W. H. Auden.*

THE butterfly, a cabbage-white,  
(His honest idiocy of flight)  
Will never now, it is too late,  
Master the art of flying straight,  
Yet has—who knows so well as I?—  
A just sense of how not to fly:  
He lurches here and here by guess  
And God and hope and hopelessness.  
Even the aerobatic swift  
Has not his flying-crooked gift.

*Robert Graves's seventh child, Juan, was born on December 21, 1945. The fact that the winter solstice falls on this date and that it is also the traditional birthday of many figures of divinity such as the Greek Apollo, Dionysus, Zeus, Hermes, the Syrian Tammuz, the Egyptian Horus, the Welsh Merlin and Llew Llaw, etc., leads the poet to address his son as one in a great succession of heroes. His fate, like theirs, he suggests, will be a retelling of "one story and one story only": the Moon Goddess will appear to him in her different characters at different seasons of the year, i.e., at different years of his life span, as mother, lover, and widow. The Boreal Crown is Corona Borealis, which was the purgatory where many such heroes went after death. The "log" in the fifth stanza is the yule log, traditionally burned at the end of the year. The "great boar" is the beast that kills heroes at the fall of the year. Understand your fate, the poet says to his infant son, accept it, and live it.*

TO JUAN AT THE WINTER SOLSTICE

THERE is one story and one story only  
That will prove worth your telling,  
Whether as learned bard or gifted child;  
To it all lines or lesser gauds belong  
That startle with their shining  
Such common stories as they stray into.  
  
Is it of trees you tell, their months and virtues,  
Or strange beasts that beset you,  
Of birds that croak at you the Triple will?  
Or of the Zodiac and how slow it turns  
Below the Boreal Crown,  
Prison of all true kings that ever reigned?  
  
Water to water, ark again to ark,  
From woman back to woman:

So each new victim treads unfalteringly  
The never altered circuit of his fate,  
Bringing twelve peers as witness  
Both to his starry rise and starry fall.

Or is it of the Virgin's silver beauty,  
All fish below the thighs?  
She in her left hand bears a leafy quince;  
When, with her right she crooks a finger smiling,  
How may the King hold back?  
Royally then he barter life for love.

Or of the undying snake from chaos hatched,  
Whose coils contain the ocean,  
Into whose chops with naked sword he springs,  
Then in black water, tangled by the reeds,  
Battles three days and nights,  
To be spewed up beside her scalloped shore?

Much snow is falling, winds roar hollowly,  
The owl hoots from the elder,  
Fear in your heart cries to the loving-cup:  
Sorrow to sorrow as the sparks fly upward.  
The log groans and confesses  
There is one story and one story only.

Dwell on her graciousness, dwell on her smiling,  
Do not forget what flowers  
The great boar trampled down in ivy time.  
Her brow was creamy as the crested wave,  
Her sea-blue eyes were wild  
But nothing promised that is not performed.

**O**FTEN, half-way to sleep,  
 Not yet sunken deep—  
 The sudden moment on me comes  
 From a mountain shagged and steep,  
 With terrible roll of dream drums,  
 Reverberations, cymbals, horns replying.  
 When with standards flying,  
 Horsemen in clouds behind,  
 The coloured pomps unwind,  
 The Carnival wagons  
 With their saints and their dragons  
 On the scroll of my teeming mind:  
 The Creation and Flood  
 With our Saviour's Blood  
 And fat Silenus' flagons,  
 And every rare beast  
 From the South and East,  
 Both greatest and least,  
 On and on,  
 In endless, different procession.  
 I stand at the top rungs  
 Of a ladder reared in the air,  
 And I rail in strange tongues,  
 So the crowds murmur and stare;  
 Then volleys again the blare  
 Of horns, and summer flowers  
 Fly scattering in showers,  
 And the sun leaps in the sky,  
 While the drums thumping by  
 Proclaim me . . . .

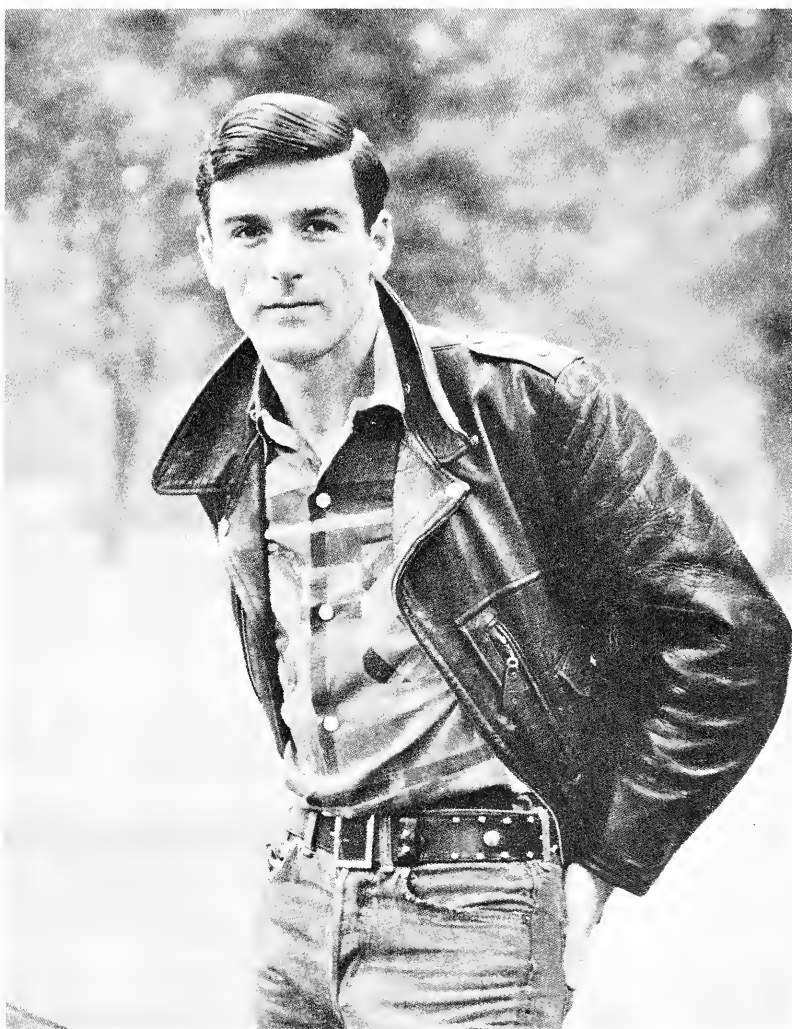
Oh, then, when I wake,  
 Could I courage take



To renew my speech,  
Could I stretch and reach  
The flowers and the ripe fruit  
Laid out at the ladder's foot,  
Could I rip a silken shred  
From the banner tossed ahead,  
Could I call a double-flam  
From the drums, could the goat  
Horned with gold, could the ram  
With a flank like a barn-door,  
The dwarf, the blackamoor,  
Could Jonah and the Whale  
And the Holy Grail,  
The Ape with his platter  
Going clitter-clatter,  
The Nymphs and the Satyr,  
And every marvellous matter  
Come before me here,  
Standing near and clear—  
Could I make it so that you  
Might wonder at them too!  
—Glories of land and sea,  
Of Heaven glittering free,  
Castles hugely built in Spain,  
Glories of Cockaigne,  
Of that spicy kingdom, Cand,  
Of the Delectable Land,  
Of the Land of Crooked Stiles.  
Of the Fortunate Isles,  
Of the more than three-score miles  
That to Babylon lead  
(A pretty city indeed  
Built on a four-square plan),  
Of the Land of the Gold Man

Whose eager horses whinny  
In their cribs of gold,  
Of the Land of Whipperginny,  
Of the land where none grows old . . . .  
But cowardly I tell,  
Rather, of the Town of Hell—  
A huddle of dirty woes  
And houses in fading rows  
Straggled through space:  
Hell has no market-place,  
Nor point where four ways meet,  
Nor principal street,  
Nor barracks, nor Town Hall,  
Nor shops at all,  
Nor rest for weary feet,  
Nor theatre, square, or park,  
Nor lights after dark,  
Nor churches, nor inns,  
Nor convenience for sins—  
Neither ends nor begins,  
Rambling, limitless, hated well,  
This Town of Hell  
Where between sleep and sleep I dwell.

**THOM GUNN**, born 1929, in Gravesend, England, lives in Berkeley, where he is a member of the English department of the University of California. He was educated at Cambridge, after which he moved permanently to the United States, first as a student of Yvor Winters at Stanford and later as a teacher.



THE blue jay scuffling in the bushes follows  
Some hidden purpose, and the gust of birds  
That spurts across the field, the wheeling swallows,  
Have nested in the trees and undergrowth.  
Seeking their instinct, or their poise, or both,  
One moves with an uncertain violence  
Under the dust thrown by a baffled sense  
Or the dull thunder of approximate words.

On motorcycles, up the road, they come:  
Small, black, as flies hanging in heat, the Boys,  
Until the distance throws them forth, their hum  
Bulges to thunder held by calf and thigh.  
In goggles, donned impersonality,  
In gleaming jackets trophied with the dust,  
They strap in doubt—by hiding it, robust—  
And almost hear a meaning in their noise.

Exact conclusion of their hardness  
Has no shape yet, but from known whereabouts  
They ride, direction where the tires press.  
They scare a flight of birds across the field:  
Much that is natural, to the will must yield.  
Men manufacture both machine and soul,  
And use what they imperfectly control  
To dare a future from the taken routes.

It is a part solution, after all.  
One is not necessarily discord  
On earth; or damned because, half animal,  
One lacks direct instinct, because one wakes  
Afloat on movement that divides and breaks.

One joins the movement in a valueless world,  
Choosing it, till, both hurler and the hurled,  
One moves as well, always toward, toward.

A minute holds them, who have come to go:  
The self-defined, astride the created will  
They burst away; the towns they travel through  
Are home for neither bird nor holiness,  
For birds and saints complete their purposes.  
At worst, one is in motion; and at best,  
Reaching no absolute, in which to rest,  
One is always nearer by not keeping still.

#### BLACK JACKETS

**I**N the silence that prolongs the span  
Rawly of music when the record ends,  
The red-haired boy who drove a van  
In weekday overalls but, like his friends,  
Wore cycle boots and jacket here  
To suit the Sunday hangout he was in,  
Heard, as he stretched back from his beer,  
Leather creak softly round his neck and chin.  
Before him, on a coal-black sleeve  
Remote exertion had lined, scratched, and burned  
Insignia that could not revive  
The heroic fall or climb where they were earned.  
On the other drinkers bent together,  
Concocting selves for their impervious kit,  
He saw it as no more than leather  
Which, taut across the shoulders grown to it,

Sent through the dimness of a bar  
As sudden and anonymous hints of light  
As those that shipping give, that are  
Now flickers in the Bay, now lost in night.

He stretched out like a cat, and rolled  
The bitterish taste of beer upon his tongue,  
And listened to a joke being told:  
The present was the things he stayed among.

If it was only loss he wore,  
He wore it to assert, with fierce devotion,  
Complicity and nothing more.  
He recollected his initiation,

And one especially of the rites.  
For on his shoulders they had put tattoos:  
The group's name on the left, The Knights,  
And on the right the slogan Born To Lose.

#### CONSIDERING THE SNAIL

THE snail pushes through a green  
night, for the grass is heavy  
with water and meets over  
the bright path he makes, where rain  
has darkened the earth's dark. He  
moves in a wood of desire,  
  
pale antlers barely stirring  
as he hunts. I cannot tell  
what power is at work, drenched there  
with purpose, knowing nothing.  
What is a snail's fury? All  
I think is that if later

I parted the blades above  
the tunnel and saw the thin  
trail of broken white across  
litter, I would never have  
imagined the slow passion  
to that deliberate progress.

FROM THE HIGHEST CAMP

NOTHING in this bright region melts or shifts.  
The local names are concepts: the Ravine,  
Pemmican Ridge, North Col, Death Camp, they mean  
The streetless rise, the dazzling abstract drifts,  
To which particular names adhere by chance,  
From custom lightly, not from character.  
We stand on a white terrace and confer;  
This is the last camp of experience.

What is that sudden yelp upon the air?  
And whose are these cold droppings? whose malformed  
Purposeless tracks about the slope? We know.  
The abominable endures, existing where  
Nothing else can: it is—unfed, unwarmed—  
Born of rejection, of the boundless snow.



**DONALD HALL**, born 1928, in New Haven, Connecticut, lives with his wife and son in Ann Arbor, where he teaches in the English department of the University of Michigan. He was educated at Harvard and Oxford, where his poem "Exile" was awarded the Newdigate Prize. With Robert Pack and Louis Simpson, he was editor of the anthology *The New Poets of England and America* (1957).



## THE SLEEPING GIANT

(A Hill, So Named, in Hamden, Connecticut)

THE whole day long, under the walking sun  
That poised an eye on me from its high floor,  
Holding my toy beside the clapboard house  
I looked for him, the summer I was four.

I was afraid the waking arm would break  
From the loose earth and rub against his eyes  
A fist of trees, and the whole country tremble  
In the exultant labor of his rise;

Then he with giant steps in the small streets  
Would stagger, cutting off the sky, to seize  
The roofs from house and home because we had  
Covered his shape with dirt and planted trees;

And then kneel down and rip with fingernails  
A trench to pour the enemy Atlantic  
Into our basin, and the water rush,  
With the streets full and all the voices frantic.

That was the summer I expected him.  
Later the high and watchful sun instead  
Walked low behind the house, and school began,  
And winter pulled a sheet over his head.

## THE BODY POLITIC

I SHOT my friend to save my country's life,  
And when the happy bullet struck him dead,  
I was saluted by the drum and fife  
Corps of a high school, while the traitor bled.

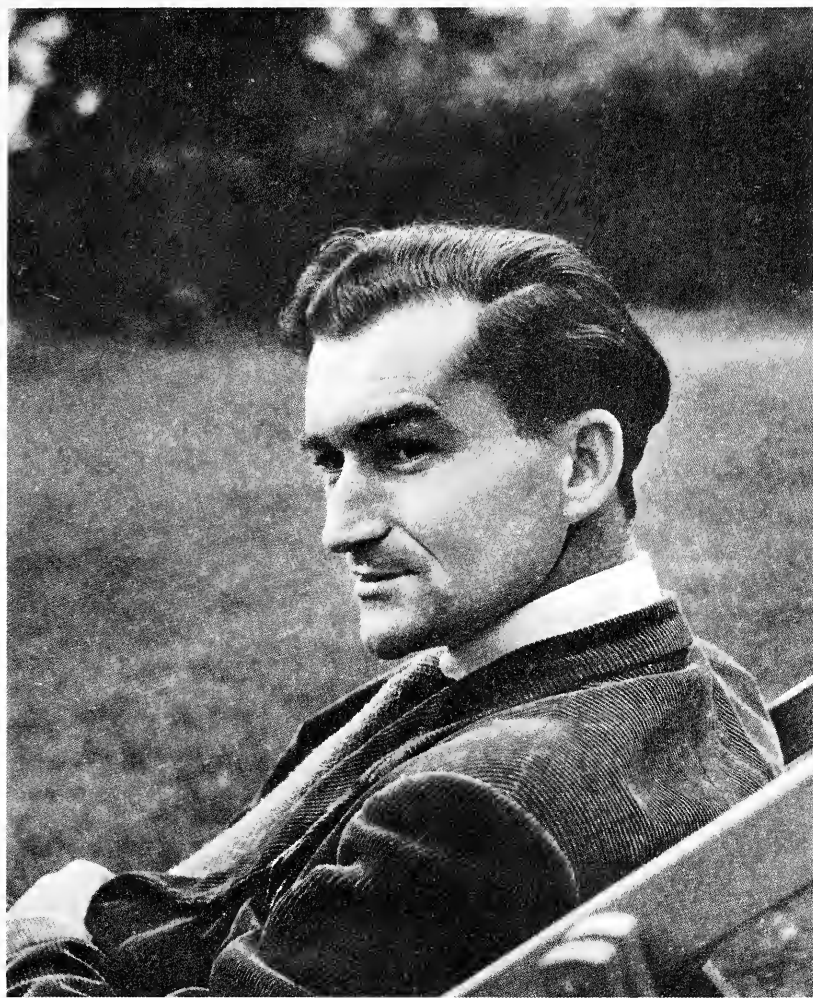
I never thought until I pulled the trigger  
But that I did the difficult and good.  
I thought republics stood for something bigger,  
For the mind of man, as Plato said they stood.

So when I heard the duty they assigned,  
Shooting my friend seemed only sanity;  
To keep disorder from the state of mind  
Was mental rectitude, it seemed to me.

The audience dispersed. I felt depressed.  
I went to where my orders issued from,  
But the right number on the street was just  
A rickety old house, vacant and dumb.

I tried to find the true address, but where?  
Nobody told me what I really wanted;  
Just secretaries sent me here and there  
To other secretaries. I was daunted.

Poor Fred. His presence will be greatly missed  
By children and by cronies by the score.  
The State (I learn too late) does not exist;  
Man lives by love, and not by metaphor.



**MICHAEL HAMBURGER**, *born March 22, 1924, in Berlin, Germany, lives with his wife and three children in Reading, Berkshire, where he teaches at the University of Reading. He was educated at Christ Church, Oxford, and spent four years in the armed services. He has published many critical essays, some of which are included in his volume Reason and Energy (1957), and is well known as a translator of German literature.*

**T**o my twin who lives in a cruel country  
 I wrote a letter at last;  
 For my bones creaked out in our long silence  
 That seven years had passed,  
  
 Seven whole years since he and I  
 By word or token exchanged  
 The message I dare not do without:  
 That still we are not estranged,  
  
 Though I watch figures in a city office  
 And he the waves of the sea,  
 Keeping no count since he hardly cares  
 What happens to him or to me;  
  
 Since to names and numbers he closed his head  
 When, children still, we were parted,  
 Chose birth and death for his calendar,  
 But leaves the dates uncharted,  
  
 Being one who forgets what I remember,  
 Who knows what I do not,  
 Who has learnt the ways of otter and raven  
 While I've grown polyglot.  
  
 Lately I found a cactus in flower  
 And feared for his apple-trees,  
 Dozed in the club and saw his cattle  
 Drag with a foul disease,  
  
 And my bones grown stiff with leaning and lying  
 Cried out that I'll labour in vain  
 Till I help my twin to rebuild his hovel  
 That's open to wind and rain.

So I sent him a note, expecting no answer,  
And a cheque he'd never cash.  
For I knew he was one who'd smile if he heard  
His own roof come down with a crash,

But above the porpoise-leaping bay  
Where ploughshare fin and tail  
Cut furrows the foam-flecked sea fills up  
He'd stand in the swishing gale,

Calm as the jackdaws that nest in crannies  
And no more prone to doubt,  
With gull and cormorant perched on the rocks  
Would wait the weather out.

Yet he wrote by return: "Have no fear for your dwelling  
Though dry-rot gnaws at the floors;  
Only lighten their load of marble and metal,  
Keep clear the corridors,

Move out the clocks that clutter your study,  
And the years will leave you alone:  
Every frame I know of lasts long enough,  
Though but cardboard, wood or bone.

And spare me your nightmares, brother, I beg you,  
They make my daemons laugh,  
They scare the spirits that rarely will visit  
A man with no wand or staff,

With no symbol, no book and no formula,  
No lore to aid him at all,  
Who wherever he walks must find the image  
That holds his mentors in thrall.

But your waking cares put down on paper  
For me to give to the wind,

That the seed may fall and the dry leaf crumble,  
Not a wisp be left behind  
Of the tangle that hides the dual site  
Where even you and I  
Still may meet again and together build  
One house before we die.”

**JOHN HEATH-STUBBS** *was born July 9, 1918, in London, where he now lives. He was educated at schools in Sussex and the Isle of Wight until he was sixteen, when failing eyesight caused him to be put under private tutors. After an operation when he was eighteen, he was sent for a year to the Worcester College for the Blind and then entered Oxford, where he took a "first class" in English language and literature. In 1952 he was appointed poet-in-residence at the University of Leeds and later taught at the University of Alexandria in Egypt. He has written one volume of criticism, The Darkling Plain.*



VENERABLE Mother Tooth-ache  
Climb down from the white battlements,  
Stop twisting in your yellow fingers  
The fourfold rope of nerves;  
And tomorrow I will give you a tot of whiskey  
To hold in your cupped hands,  
A garland of anise-flowers,  
And three cloves like nails.

And tell the attendant gnomes  
It is time to knock off now,  
To shoulder their little pick-axes,  
Their cold-chisels and drills.  
And you may mount by a silver ladder  
Into the sky, to grind  
In the cracked polished mortar  
Of the hollow moon.

By the lapse of warm waters,  
And the poppies nodding like red coals,  
The paths on the granite mountains,  
And the plantation of my dreams.

THE LADY'S COMPLAINT

I SPEAK of that lady I heard last night,  
Maudlin over her gin and water,  
In a sloppy bar with a fulvous light  
And an air that was smeared with smoke and laughter:  
How youth decamps and cold age comes after,



In fifty years she had found it true—

She sighed for the damage that time had brought her:  
‘Oh, after death there’s a judgement due.

‘What once was as sleek as a seal’s pelt,  
My shapeless body has fallen from grace;  
My soul and my shoes are worn down to the welt,  
And no cosmetic can mask my face,  
As under talcum and oxide you trace  
How the bones stick out, and the ghost peeps through—  
A wanderer, I, in Wraith-bone Place,  
And after death there’s a judgement due.

‘My roundabout horses have cantered away,  
The gilded and garrulous seasons are flown;  
What echo is left of the rag-time bray  
Of the tenor sax and the susaphone?  
But I was frightened to sleep alone  
(As now I must do, as now I must do)  
And a chittering bat-voice pipes “Atone,  
For after death there’s a judgement due.”

‘Green apples I bit when I was green,  
My teeth are on edge at the maggotty core;  
Life is inclement, obscure, obscene;  
Nothing’s amusing—not any more;  
But love’s abrasions have left me sore—  
To hairy Harry and half-mast Hugh  
I gave the love I was starving for,  
And after death there’s a judgement due.

‘Potentate, swirling in stark cold air  
The corn from the husks—I offer to you  
My terror-struck and incredulous prayer,  
For after death there’s a judgement due.’

**ANTHONY HECHT**, *born January 16, 1923, in New York, now lives in his native city. He was educated at Bard College and Columbia University and, for a number of years, was on the English faculty of Smith College. Married and divorced, he has two sons, Jason and Adam.*



*Samuel Sewall (1652–1750) was a leading jurist in Puritan times in Massachusetts. Having once been a minister, he gave up the cloth for a public career and became one of the judges responsible for the conviction of nineteen persons in the famous Salem witchcraft trials. In this poem, Anthony Hecht is concerned, not with Sewall as a public man, but solely with the humanly engaging aspects of the courtship of a man of exemplary, and sometimes frightening, rectitude.*

SAMUEL SEWALL

SAMUEL Sewall, in a world of wigs,  
Flouted opinion in his personal hair;  
For foppery he gave not any figs,  
But in his right and honor took the air.

Thus in his naked style, though well attired,  
He went forth in the city, or paid court  
To Madam Winthrop, whom he much admired,  
Most godly, but yet liberal with the port.

And all the town admired for two full years  
His excellent address, his gifts of fruit,  
Her gracious ways and delicate white ears,  
And held the course of nature absolute.

But yet she bade him suffer a peruke,  
“That One be not distinguished from the All”;  
Delivered of herself this stern rebuke  
Framed in the resonant language of St. Paul.

“Madam,” he answered her, “I have a Friend  
Furnishes me with hair out of His strength,  
And He requires only I attend  
Unto His charity and to its length.”

And all the town was witness to his trust:  
On Monday he walked out with the Widow Gibbs,  
A pious lady of charm and notable bust,  
Whose heart beat tolerably beneath her ribs.

On Saturday he wrote proposing marriage,  
And closed, imploring that she be not cruel,  
“Your favorable answer will oblige,  
Madam, your humble servant, Samuel Sewall.”

*A botanical garden in Brooklyn becomes the model for a jungle Eden and leads the poet into a meditation upon "the botanical condition" of all living things, importantly including man. Ischia is an island off Italy, a resort as fashionable today as it was in Roman times. Madame Curie was the Polish-born chemist who with her French husband, Pierre, discovered radium in 1898. Lilith was the first wife of Adam, according to popular medieval belief. "Lullay myn lykyng, myn owyn dere derlyng" is the refrain of an old lullaby. The Gare du Nord is a railway station in Paris. Polyphemus was a mythical Greek Cyclops who imprisoned Odysseus and his men in a cave and devoured two of the group every day until Odysseus got him drunk and blinded him. Mort' saison is taken from the Little Testament of François Villon, the second stanza of which begins: "En ce temps que j'ai dit devant,/ Sur le Noel, morte saison,/ Que les lous se vivent de vent/ Et qu'on se tient en sa maison, . . ." Pyrites is the technical term for fool's gold, the name given to any of a number of metallic-looking sulfides that resemble gold. Making a pun of the similarity between pyrites and Stylites, the name of an ascetic of Antioch who lived on the top of a pillar, the poet creates "Simeon Pyrites," patron saint of a fool's paradise.*

#### LA CONDITION BOTANIQUE

**R**OMANS, rheumatic, gouty, came  
 To bathe in Ischian springs where water steamed,  
 Puffed and enlarged their bold imperial thoughts, and which  
 Later Madame Curie declared to be so rich  
 In radioactive content as she deemed  
 Should win them everlasting fame.  
 Scattered throughout their ice and snow  
 The Finns have built airtight cabins of log  
 Where they may lie, limp and entranced by the sedative purr

Of steam pipes, or torment themselves with flails of fir  
To stimulate the blood, and swill down grog,  
Setting the particles aglow.

Similarly the Turks, but know  
Nothing of the more delicate thin sweat  
Of plants, breathing their scented oxygen upon  
Brooklyn's botanical gardens, roofed with glass and run  
So to the pleasure of each leafy pet,  
Manured, addressed in Latin, so

To its thermostatic happiness—  
Spreading its green and innocence to the ground  
Where pipes, like Satan masquerading as the snake,  
Coil and uncoil their frightful liquid length, and make  
Gurglings of love mixed with a rumbling sound  
Of sharp intestinal distress—

So to its pleasure, as I said,  
That each particular vegetable may thrive,  
Early and late, as in the lot first given Man,  
Sans interruption, as when Universal Pan  
Led on the Eternal Spring. The spears of chive,  
The sensitive plant, showing its dread,

The Mexican flytrap, that can knit  
Its quilled jaws pitilessly, and would hurt  
A fly with pleasure, leading Riley's life in bed  
Of peat moss and of chemicals, and is thoughtfully fed  
Flies for the entrée, flies for the dessert,  
Fruit flies for fruit, and all of it

Administered as by a wife—  
Lilith our lady, patroness of plants,  
Who sings, *Lullay myn lykyng, myn owyn dere derlyng,*

Madrigals nightly to the spiny stalk in sterling  
Whole notes of admiration and romance—  
This, then, is what is called The Life.

And we, like disinherited heirs,  
Old Adams, can inspect the void estate  
At visiting hours: the unconditional garden spot,  
The effortless innocence preserved, for God knows what,  
And think, as we depart by the toll gate:  
No one has lived here these five thousand years.

Our world is turned on points, is whirled  
On wheels, Tibetan prayer wheels, French verb wheels,  
The toothy wheels of progress, the terrible torque  
Insisting, and in the sky, even above New York  
Rotate the marvelous four-fangled seals  
Ezekiel saw. The mother-of-pearled

Home of the bachelor oyster lies  
Fondled in fluent shifts of bile and lime  
As sunlight strikes the water, and it is of our world,  
And will appear to us sometime where the finger is curled  
Between the frets upon a mandolin,  
Fancy cigar boxes, and eyes

Of ceremonial masks; and all  
The places where Kilroy inscribed his name,  
For instance, the ladies' rest room in the Gare du Nord,  
The iron rump of Buddha, whose hallowed, hollowed core  
Admitted tourists once but all the same  
Housed a machine gun, and let fall

A killing fire from its eyes  
During the war; and Polyphemus hurled  
Tremendous rocks that stand today off Sicily's coast

Signed with the famous scrawl of our most traveled ghost;  
And all these various things are of our world.  
But what's become of Paradise?

Ah, it is lodged in glass, survives  
In Brooklyn, like a throwback, out of style,  
Like an incomprehensible veteran of the Grand  
Army of the Republic in the reviewing stand  
Who sees young men in a mud-colored file  
March to the summit of their lives,

For glory, for their country, with the flag  
Joining divergent stars of North and South  
In one blue field of heaven, till they fall in blood  
And are returned at last unto their native mud—  
The eyes weighed down with stones, the sometimes mouth  
Helpless to masticate or gag

Its old inheritance of earth.  
In the sweat of thy face shalt thou manage, said the Lord.  
And we, old Adams, stare through the glass panes and wince,  
Fearing to see the ancestral apple, pear, or quince,  
The delicacy of knowledge, the fleshed Word,  
The globe of wisdom that was worth

Our lives, or so our parents thought,  
And turn away to strengthen our poor breath  
And body, keep the flesh rosy with hopeful dreams,  
Peach-colored, practical, to decorate the bones, with schemes  
Of life insurance, Ice-Cream-After-Death,  
Hormone injections, against the *mort'*

*Saison*, largely to babble praise  
Of Simeon Pyrites, patron saint  
Of our Fools' Paradise, whose glittering effigy



Shines in God's normal sunlight till the blind men see

Visions as permanent as artists paint:

The body's firm, nothing decays

Upon the heirloom set of bones

In their gavotte. Yet we look through the glass

Where green lies ageless under snow-stacked roofs in steam-

Fitted apartments, and reflect how bud and stem

Are wholly flesh, and the immaculate grass

Does without buttressing of bones.

In open field or public bed

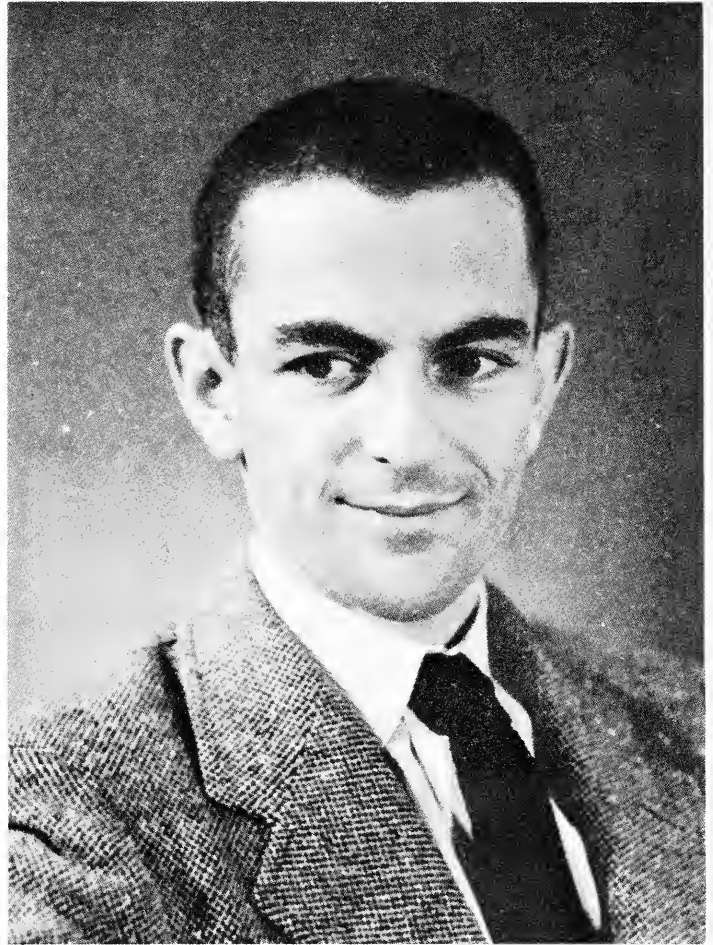
With ultraviolet help, man hopes to learn

The leafy secret, pay his most outstanding debt

To God in the salt and honesty of his sweat,

And in his streaming face manly to earn

His daily and all-nourishing bread.



**DANIEL HOFFMAN**, born 1923, in New York City, lives with his wife and two children in Swarthmore, Pennsylvania, where he is associate professor of English literature at Swarthmore College. He was educated at Columbia University, served in the Army Air Force in World War II, and subsequently taught at Columbia and at the University of Dijon, in France. Beyond poetry, his works include several scholarly studies of phases of American literature.

*The resolution of this poem is based directly on the story of Odysseus and the Sirens: Fearful that he and his men would be lulled into forgetfulness and death by the lovely songs of the sea-maidens, Odysseus devised a scheme by which his ship might safely pass the island from which they beckoned. He ordered every man in the crew to put wax in his ears and then commanded them to lash him to the mast so securely that, no matter how he might try, he could not get free. In this way, they escaped the fatal enchantment of the Sirens, with only Odysseus himself hearing, in a state of "sweet agony," the songs they sang.*

#### THE SEALS IN PENOBSCOT BAY

hadn't heard of the atom bomb,  
so I shouted a warning to them.

Our destroyer (on trial run) slid by  
the rocks where they gamboled and played;

they must have misunderstood,  
or perhaps not one of them heard

me over the engines and tides.  
As I watched them over our wake

I saw their sleek skins in the sun  
ripple, light-flecked, on the rock,

plunge, bubbling, into the brine,  
and couple & laugh in the troughs

between the waves' whitecaps and froth.  
Then the males clambered clumsily up

and lustily crowed like seacocks,  
sure that their prowess held thrall

all the sharks, other seals, and seagulls.  
And daintily flipped the females,  
  
seawenches with musical tails;  
each looked at the Atlantic as  
  
though it were her looking-glass.  
If my warning had ever been heard  
  
it was sound none would now ever heed.  
And I, while I watched those far seals,  
  
tasted honey that buzzed in my ears  
and saw, out to windward, the sails  
  
of an obsolete ship with banked oars  
that swept like two combs through the spray.  
  
And I wished for a vacuum of wax  
to ward away all those strange sounds,  
  
yet I envied the sweet agony  
of him who was tied to the mast,  
  
when the boom, when the boom, when the boom  
of guns punched dark holes in the sky.

**JOHN HOLLANDER**, born 1929, lives with his wife and young daughter in New Haven, Connecticut, where he is on the faculty of Yale University. He was educated at Columbia, Indiana, and Harvard, where he was a member of the Society of Fellows. He is poetry editor of the *Partisan Review* and the author of *The Untuning of the Sky: Ideas of Music in English Poetry 1500–1706*. Before going to Yale, he taught at Connecticut College for Women, in New London.



**W**HEN Adam found his rib was gone  
 He cursed and sighed and cried and swore,  
 And looked with cold resentment on  
 The creature God had used it for.  
 All love's delights were quickly spent  
 And soon his sorrows multiplied;  
 He learned to blame his discontent  
 On something stolen from his side.

And so in every age we find  
 Each Jack, destroying every Joan,  
 Divides and conquers womankind  
 In vengeance for the missing bone;  
 By day he spins out quaint conceits  
 With gossip, flattery and song  
 And then at night, between the sheets  
 He wrongs the girl to right the wrong.

Though shoulder, bosom, lip and knee  
 Are praised in every kind of art,  
 Here is Love's true anatomy:  
 His rib is gone; he'll have her heart.  
 So women bear the debt alone  
 And live eternally distressed,  
 For though we throw the dog his bone  
 He wants it back with interest.

## THE GREAT BEAR

**E**VEN on clear nights, lead the most supple children  
 Out onto hilltops, and by no means will

They make it out. Neither the gruff round image  
From a remembered page nor the uncertain  
Finger tracing that image out can manage  
To mark the lines of what ought to be there,  
Passing through certain bounding stars, until  
The whole massive expanse of bear appear  
Swinging, across the ecliptic; and, although  
The littlest ones say nothing, others respond,  
Making us thankful in varying degrees  
For what we would have shown them: "There it is!"  
"I see it now!" Even "Very like a bear!"  
Would make us grateful. Because there is no bear

We blame our memory of the picture: trudging  
Up the dark, starlit path, stooping to clutch  
An anxious hand, perhaps the outline faded  
Then; perhaps could we have retained the thing  
In mind ourselves, with it we might have staged  
Something convincing. We easily forget  
The huge, clear, homely dipper that is such  
An event to reckon with, an object set  
Across the space the bear should occupy;  
But even so, the trouble lies in pointing  
At any stars. For one's own finger aims  
Always elsewhere: the man beside one seems  
Never to get the point. "No! The bright star  
Just above my fingertip." The star,

If any, that he sees beyond one's finger  
Will never be the intended one. To bring  
Another's eye to bear in such a fashion  
On any single star seems to require  
Something very like a constellation  
That both habitually see at night;  
Not in the stars themselves, but in among

Their scatter, perhaps, some old familiar sight  
Is always there to take a bearing from.  
And if the smallest child of all should cry  
Out on the wet, black grass because he sees  
Nothing but stars, though claiming that there is  
Some bear not there that frightens him, we need  
Only reflect that we ourselves have need

Of what is fearful (being really nothing)  
With which to find our way about the path  
That leads back down the hill again, and with  
Which to enable the older children standing  
By us to follow what we mean by "This  
Star," "That one," or "The other one beyond it."  
But what of the tiny, scared ones?—Such a bear,  
Who needs it? We can still make do with both  
The dipper that we always knew was there  
And the bright, simple shapes that suddenly  
Emerge on certain nights. To understand  
The signs that stars compose, we need depend  
Only on stars that are entirely there  
And the apparent space between them. There

Never need be lines between them, puzzling  
Our sense of what is what. What a star does  
Is never to surprise us as it covers  
The center of its patch of darkness, sparkling  
Always, a point in one of many figures.  
One solitary star would be quite useless,  
A frigid conjecture, true but trifling;  
And any single sign is meaningless  
If unnecessary. Crab, bull, and ram,  
Or frosty, irregular polygons of our own  
Devising, or finally the Great Dark Bear  
That we can never quite believe is there—



Having the others, any one of them  
Can be dispensed with. The bear, of all of them,  
  
Is somehow most like any one, taken  
At random, in that we always tend to say  
That just because it might be there; because  
Some Ancients really traced it out, a broken  
And complicated line, webbing bright stars  
And fainter ones together; because a bear  
Habitually appeared—then even by day  
It is for us a thing that should be there.  
We should not want to train ourselves to see it.  
The world is everything that happens to  
Be true. The stars at night seem to suggest  
The shapes of what might be. If it were best,  
Even, to have it there (such a great bear!  
All hung with stars!), there still would be no bear.



**BARBARA HOWES**, born 1914, in Boston, lives with her husband, the poet William Jay Smith, and their two sons in North Pownal, Vermont. After graduating from Bennington, she lived in New York City, where she was founder and editor of the distinguished literary magazine *Chimera*. Since her marriage she has lived with her family for long periods in Italy and in France.

*A chimera is a creature out of mythology that breathes fire and has a lion's head, a goat's body, and a serpent's tail. It is usually considered a horrible and unreal figment of the imagination, but in this poem it is judged differently. Hippocampi are sea horses with two forefeet and bodies that end in tails like those of dolphins or of fish.*

## CHIMERA

AFTER a fearful maze where doubt  
Crept at my side down the terrible lightless channel,  
I came in my dream to a sandspit parting  
Wind-tossed fields of ocean. There,  
Lightstepping, appeared  
A trio of moose or mules,  
Ugly as peat,  
Their trotters slim as a queen's.  
"Hippocampi!" cried a voice as they sped  
Over black water, their salty course,  
And away. From the heaving sea  
Then sprang a fabulous beast  
For its evening gallop.  
Head of a lion, goat's head rearing  
Back, derisive, wild—the dragon  
Body scaling the waves; each reckless  
Nature in balance, flying apart  
In one. How it sported  
Across the water, how it ramped and ran!  
My heart took heart. Awaking, I thought:  
What was disclosed in this vision  
Was good; phantom or real,  
I have looked on a noble animal.

WITH seven matching calfskin cases for his new suits—  
 Wife and three children following up the plank—  
 The Colonel shepherds his brood on board.

As the band pumps out “Arrivederci  
 Roma,” the airman’s apple  
 Face bobs over the first-class rail;  
 Across the watery gap, Sicilian  
 Crowds like lemmings rush at the narrowing pier.

Poised on the balls of his feet, the athlete  
 Goes below. Headwaiters  
 Screen him with menus; sommeliers  
 Approach on the double; corks pop to the creaking  
 Of timbers, while he dreams  
 Of winning every ship’s pool.

Florid, the airman bunts  
 Favors around the dance floor: sky-blue-pink  
 Balloons doze on the air. It is the Captain’s  
 Dinner; haloed in streamers, he romps  
 With a Duchess and wins  
 At Musical Chairs.

Later, on the boat-deck, laced  
 Tight as a hammock by Irish  
 Whiskey, the athlete nuzzles the nurse. Collapsed  
 Like a tent around her, he rolls  
 With the ship.

After breakfast, the children on deck, New York  
 Near, balling his fists, the hero  
 Turns on his wife:  
 He hits out as if to do her honor.

With seven matching calfskin cases for his new suits—  
Wife and children following down the plank—  
The Colonel shepherds his brood ashore.

In forest-green sportcoat and desert brogans, he passes  
Through Customs like quicksilver. His wife  
Is heavily veiled; her three  
Children follow like figures in effigy.

**TED HUGHES**, born August 17, 1930, in Mytholmroyd, Yorkshire, was the husband of the late Sylvia Plath by whom he had two children. During World War II he served with the Royal Air Force as a ground wireless mechanic and then studied at Cambridge, where he met his wife, who was attending Newnham College on a Fulbright fellowship. During a long visit to the United States, during which he lived in Northampton and Boston, Massachusetts, his first book, *The Hawk in the Rain*, was the winner of the First Publication Award of the Poetry Center of the YM-YWHA in New York City.



I sit in the top of the wood, my eyes closed.  
 Inaction, no falsifying dream  
 Between my hooked head and hooked feet:  
 Or in sleep rehearse perfect kills and eat.

The convenience of the high trees!  
 The air's buoyancy and the sun's ray  
 Are of advantage to me;  
 And the earth's faces upward for my inspection.

My feet are locked upon the rough bark.  
 It took the whole of Creation  
 To produce my foot, my each feather:  
 Now I hold Creation in my foot

Or fly up, and revolve it all slowly—  
 I kill where I please because it is all mine.  
 There is no sophistry in my body:  
 My manners are tearing off heads—

The allotment of death.  
 For the one path of my flight is direct  
 Through the bones of the living.  
 No arguments assert my right:

The sun is behind me.  
 Nothing has changed since I began.  
 My eye has permitted no change.  
 I am going to keep things like this.

THE pig lay on a barrow dead.  
It weighed, they said, as much as three men.  
Its eyes closed, pink white eyelashes.  
Its trotters stuck straight out.

Such weight and thick pink bulk  
Set in death seemed not just dead.  
It was less than lifeless, further off.  
It was like a sack of wheat.

I thumped it without feeling remorse.  
One feels guilty insulting the dead,  
Walking on graves. But this pig  
Did not seem able to accuse.

It was too dead. Just so much  
A poundage of lard and pork.  
Its last dignity had entirely gone.  
It was not a figure of fun.

Too dead now to pity.  
To remember its life, din, stronghold  
Of earthly pleasure as it had been,  
Seemed a false effort, and off the point.

Too deadly factual. Its weight  
Oppressed me—how could it be moved?  
And the trouble of cutting it up!  
The gash in its throat was shocking, but not pathetic.

Once I ran at a fair in the noise  
To catch a greased piglet  
That was faster and nimbler than a cat,  
Its squeal was the rending of metal.



Pigs must have hot blood, they feel like ovens.  
Their bite is worse than a horse's—  
They chop a half-moon clean out.  
They eat cinders, dead cats.

Distinctions and admirations such  
As this one was long finished with.  
I stared at it a long time. They were going to scald it,  
Scald it and scour it like a doorstep.



**RANDALL JARRELL**, born May 6, 1914, in Nashville, Tennessee, lives with his wife and two daughters in Greensboro, North Carolina, where he is professor of English at the Women's College of the University of North Carolina. He was educated at Vanderbilt University and has taught at the University of Texas, Sarah Lawrence, Kenyon, and in Europe at the Salzburg Seminar in American Civilization. He has been Consultant in Poetry at the Library of Congress and a literary editor of *The Nation*, and during World War II he served for three and a half years in the Army Air Force. His writings include a novel, *Pictures from an Institution*, and two volumes of essays, *Poetry and the Age* and *A Sad Heart at the Supermarket*.

*Nestus Gurley is only the boy who delivers the papers, but in this poem he looms as large as a character out of mythology. Dorian mode refers to the music of the Dorians, which the more sophisticated Athenians regarded as harsh and rough. Moravian Star is a decoration manufactured in Moravia, central Czechoslovakia. Rauwolfia is the original name for the medical extract known as snakeroot, sometimes used for treatment of mental patients.*

NESTUS GURLEY

SOMETIMES waking, sometimes sleeping,  
Late in the afternoon, or early  
In the morning, I hear on the lawn,  
On the walk, on the lawn, the soft quick step,  
The sound half song, half breath: a note or two  
That with a note or two would be a tune.  
It is Nestus Gurley.

It is an old  
Catch or snatch or tune  
In the Dorian mode: the mode of the horses  
That stand all night in the fields asleep  
Or awake, the mode of the cold  
Hunter, Orion, wheeling upside-down,  
All space and stars, in cater-cornered Heaven.  
When, somewhere under the east,  
The great march begins, with birds and silence;  
When, in the day's first triumph, dawn  
Rides over the houses, Nestus Gurley  
Delivers to me my lot.

As the sun sets, I hear my daughter say:  
"He has four routes and makes a hundred dollars."

Sometimes he comes with dogs, sometimes with children,  
Sometimes with dogs and children.  
He collects, today.

I hear my daughter say:

"Today Nestus has got on his derby."

And he says, after a little: "It's two-eighty."

"How could it be two-eighty?"

"Because this month there're five Sundays: it's two-eighty."

He collects, delivers. Before the first, least star  
Is lost in the paling east; at evening  
While the soft, side-lit, gold-leafed day  
Lingers to see the stars, the boy Nestus  
Delivers to me the Morning Star, the Evening Star  
—Ah no, only the *Morning News*, the *Evening Record*  
Of what I have done and what I have not done  
Set down and held against me in the Book  
Of Death, on paper yellowing  
Already, with one morning's sun, one evening's sun.

Sometimes I only dream him. He brings then  
News of a different morning, a judgment not of men.  
The bombers have turned back over the Pole,  
Having met a star. . . . I look at that new year  
And, waking, think of our Moravian Star  
Not lit yet, and the pure beeswax candle  
With its red flame-proofed paper pompom  
Not lit yet, and the sweetened  
Bun we brought home from the love-feast, still not eaten,  
And the song the children sang: *O Morning Star*—

And at this hour, to the dew-hushed drums  
Of the morning, Nestus Gurley  
Marches to me over the lawn; and the cat Elfie,  
Furred like a musk-ox, coon-tailed, gold-leaf-eyed,

Looks at the paper boy without alarm  
But yawns, and stretches, and walks placidly  
Across the lawn to his ladder, climbs it, and begins to purr.

I let him in,  
Go out and pick up from the grass the paper hat  
Nestus has folded: this tricorné fit for a Napoleon  
Of our days and institutions, weaving  
Baskets, being bathed, receiving  
Electric shocks, Rauwolfia. . . . I put it on  
—Ah no, only unfold it.  
There is dawn inside; and I say to no one  
About—

                  it is a note or two  
That with a note or two would—  
  say to no one  
About nothing: “He delivers dawn.”

When I lie coldly  
—Lie, that is, neither with coldness nor with warmth—  
In the darkness that is not lit by anything,  
In the grave that is not lit by anything  
Except our hope: the hope  
That is not proofed against anything, but pure  
And shining as the first, least star  
That is lost in the east on the morning of Judgment—  
May I say, recognizing the step  
Or tune or breath. . . .

                                  recognizing the breath,  
May I say, “It is Nestus Gurley.”

THE saris go by me from the embassies.

Cloth from the moon. Cloth from another planet.  
They look back at the leopard like the leopard.

And I. . . .

                    this print of mine, that has kept its color  
Alive through so many cleanings; this dull null  
Navy I wear to work, and wear from work, and so  
To my bed, so to my grave, with no  
Complaints, no comment: neither from my chief,  
The Deputy Chief Assistant, nor his chief—  
Only I complain. . . . this serviceable  
Body that no sunlight dyes, no hand suffuses  
But, dome-shadowed, withering among columns,  
Wavy beneath fountains—small, far-off, shining  
In the eyes of animals, these beings trapped  
As I am trapped but not, themselves, the trap,  
Aging, but without knowledge of their age,  
Kept safe here, knowing not of death, for death—  
Oh, bars of my own body, open, open!

The world goes by my cage and never sees me.  
And there come not to me, as come to these,  
The wild beasts, sparrows pecking the llamas' grain,  
Pigeons settling on the bears' bread, buzzards  
Tearing the meat the flies have clouded. . . .

  Vulture,  
When you come for the white rat that the foxes left,  
Take off the red helmet of your head, the black  
Wings that have shadowed me, and step to me as man:  
The wild brother at whose feet the white wolves fawn,  
To whose hand of power the great lioness

Stalks, purring. . . .

                    You know what I was,  
You see what I am: change me, change me!

## THE SNOW-LEOPARD

**H**IS pads furring the scarp's rime,  
Weightless in greys and ecru, gliding  
Invisibly, incuriously  
As the crystals of the cirri wandering  
A mile below his absent eyes,  
The leopard gazes at the caravan.  
The yaks groaning with tea, the burlaps  
Lapping and lapping each stunned universe  
That gasps like a kettle for its thinning life  
Are pools in the interminable abyss  
That ranges up through ice, through air, to night.  
Raiders of the unminding element,  
The last cold capillaries of their kind,  
They move so slowly they are motionless  
To any eye less stubborn than a man's. . . .  
From the implacable jumble of the blocks  
The grains dance icily, a scouring plume,  
Into the breath, sustaining, unsustainable,  
They trade to that last stillness for their death.  
They sense with misunderstanding horror, with desire,  
Behind the world their blood sets up in mist  
The brute and geometrical necessity:  
The leopard waving with a grating purr  
His six-foot tail; the leopard, who looks sleepily—  
Cold, fugitive, secure—at all he knows,  
At all that he is: the heart of heartlessness.



**ELIZABETH JENNINGS**, born July 26, 1926, in Boston, England, lives in Oxford, where she pursues a career as free-lance writer. Educated in private schools and at Oxford University, she has been a fellow of the Royal Society of Literature and, in 1956, was winner of the Somerset Maugham Award. She spends as much time as she can in Rome.



Nobody stays here long;  
 Deliberate visitors know  
 There is nothing here the guide-books show,  
 No ruin or statue to sustain  
 Some great emotion in their stone.  
 So visitors soon go.

Some travellers stay a little  
 To collect wine or corn  
 And here breathe in the over-subtle  
 Smell of places worn  
 Not by a marvellous death or battle  
 But by their insignificance brought down.

Yet good, a place like this,  
 For one grown tired of histories  
 To shape a human myth,  
 A story but for his  
 Delight, where he might make the place  
 His own success  
 Building what no one else had bothered with—  
 A simple life or death.

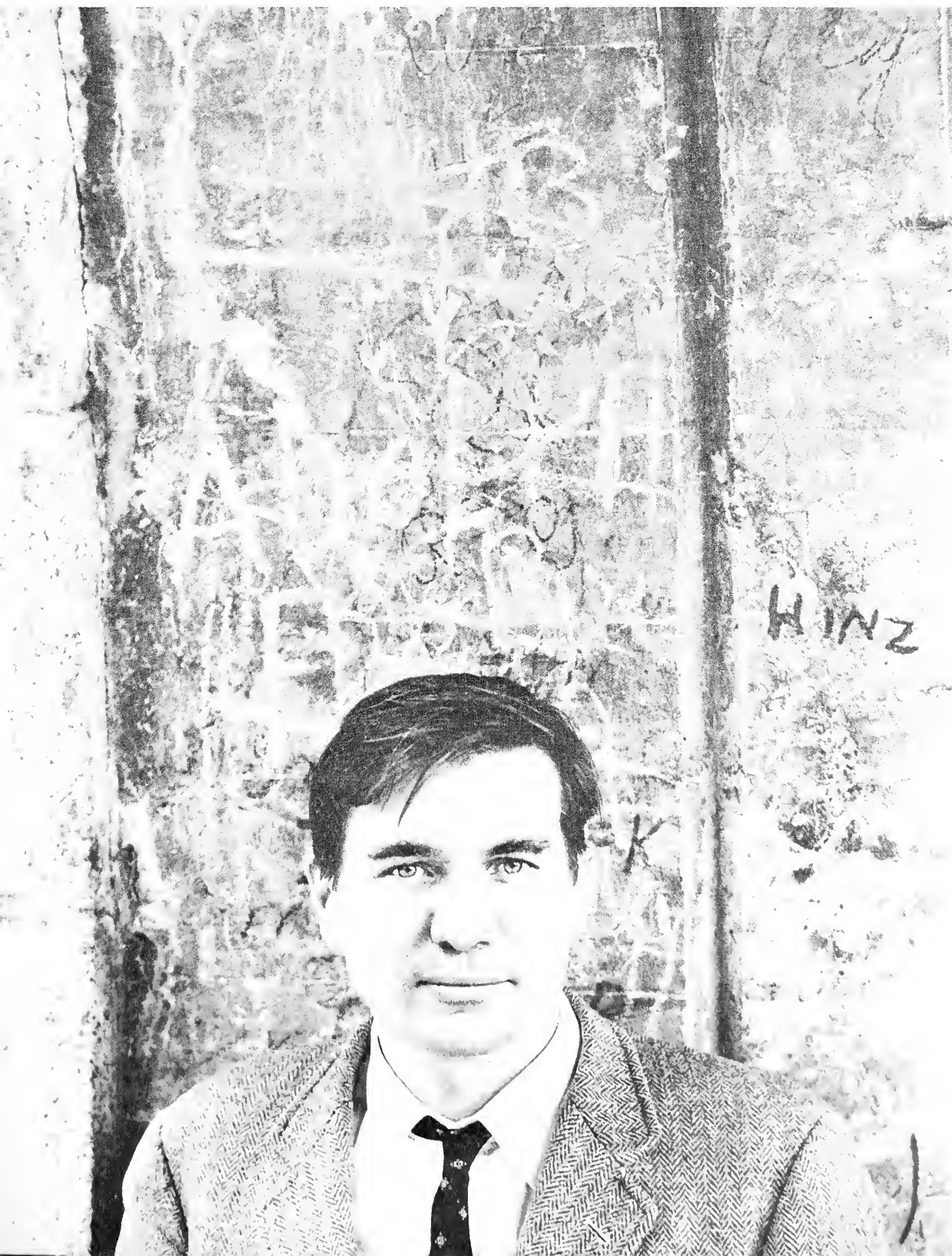
## IN THE NIGHT

OUT of my window late at night I gape  
 And see the stars but do not watch them really,  
 And hear the trains but do not listen clearly;  
 Inside my mind I turn about to keep  
 Myself awake, yet am not there entirely.  
 Something of me is out in the dark landscape.

How much am I then what I think, how much what I feel?  
How much the eye that seems to keep stars straight?  
Do I control what I can contemplate  
Or is it my vision that's amenable?  
I turn in my mind, my mind is a room whose wall  
I can see the top of but never completely scale.

All that I love is, like the night, outside,  
Good to be gazed at, looking as if it could  
With a simple gesture be brought inside my head  
Or in my heart. But my thoughts about it divide  
Me from my object. Now deep in my bed  
I turn and the world turns on the other side.

**GALWAY KINNELL**, born February 1, 1927, in Pawtucket, Rhode Island, lives in New York City. He was educated at Princeton and the University of Rochester and has taught at Alfred University, the University of Chicago, the University of Grenoble, New York University, and in Iran at the University of Teheran. Married and divorced, he devotes his time to translating and free-lance literary work.



**T**HEN it was dusk in Illinois, the small boy  
 After an afternoon of carting dung  
 Hung on the rail fence, a sapped thing  
 Weary to crying. Dark was growing tall  
 And he began to hear the pond frogs all  
 Calling upon his ear with what seemed their joy.

Soon their sound was pleasant for a boy  
 Listening in the smoky dusk and the nightfall  
 Of Illinois, and then from the field two small  
 Boys came bearing cornstalk violins  
 And rubbed three cornstalk bows with resins,  
 And they set fiddling with them as with joy.

It was now fine music the frogs and the boys  
 Did in the towering Illinois twilight make  
 And into dark in spite of a right arm's ache  
 A boy's hunched body loved out of a stalk  
 The first song of his happiness, and the song woke  
 His heart to the darkness and into the sadness of joy.

## DUCK - CHASING

**I** SPIED a very small brown duck  
 Riding the swells of the sea  
 Like a rocking-chair. "Little duck!"  
 I cried. It paddled away,  
 I paddled after it. When it dived,  
 Down I dived: too smoky was the sea,  
 We were lost. It surfaced  
 In the west, I torpedoed west

And when it dived I dived,  
And we were lost and lost and lost  
In the slant smoke of the sea.  
When I came floating up on it  
From the side, like a deadman,  
And yelled suddenly, it took off,  
It skimmed the swells as it ascended,  
Brown wings burning and flashing  
In the sun<sup>as</sup> the sea it rose over  
Burned and flashed underneath it.  
I did not see the little duck again.  
Duck-chasing is a game like any game.  
When it is over it is all over.

TO CHRIST OUR LORD

THE legs of the elk punctured the snow's crust  
And wolves floated lightfooted on the land  
Hunting Christmas elk living and frozen;  
Inside snow melted in a basin, and a woman basted  
A bird spread over coals by its wings and head.  
Snow had sealed the windows; candles lit  
The Christmas meal. The Christmas grace chilled  
The cooked bird, being long-winded and the room cold.  
During the words a boy thought, is it fitting  
To eat this creature killed on the wing?  
He had killed it himself, climbing out  
Alone on snowshoes in the Christmas dawn,  
The fallen snow swirling and the snowfall gone,  
Heard its throat scream as the rifle shouted,  
Watched it drop, and fished from the snow the dead.

He had not wanted to shoot. The sound  
Of wings beating into the hushed air  
Had stirred his love, and his fingers  
Froze in his gloves, and he wondered,  
Famishing, could he fire? Then he fired.

Now the grace praised his wicked act. At its end  
The bird on the plate  
Stared at his stricken appetite.  
There had been nothing to do but surrender,  
To kill and to eat; he ate as he had killed, with wonder.

At night on snowshoes on the drifting field  
He wondered again, for whom had love stirred?  
The stars glittered on the snow and nothing answered.  
Then the Swan spread her wings, cross of the cold north,  
The pattern and mirror of the acts of earth.

**STANLEY KUNITZ**, born July 29, 1905, in Worcester, Massachusetts, lives in New York City with his third wife, the painter Elise Asher. He was educated at Harvard and then worked for many years as an editor of biographical reference books. In World War II he was a noncommissioned officer in charge of information and education in the Air Transport Command. Subsequently he taught at Bennington, at Brandeis, and, as a visiting professor, at other American colleges. Although he had been publishing for twenty years, his wide recognition came suddenly when, in 1958, the publication of his *Selected Poems* brought him the Pulitzer Prize and a favorable reevaluation of his career by many critics and reviewers.



*Isolation, even at the pitch of love, is a recurrent theme of poets. The following lines may best be read as the meditation of a lover keenly aware of the proximity of his love and just as keenly aware of the terrible singleness of any human soul. The circumstance of the poem is focused in the line "My touch is on you, who are light-years gone."*

#### THE SCIENCE OF THE NIGHT

I TOUCH you in the night, whose gift was you,  
My careless sprawler,  
And I touch you cold, unstirring, star-bemused,  
That are become the land of your self-strangeness.  
What long seduction of the bone has led you  
Down the imploring roads I cannot take  
Into the arms of ghosts I never knew,  
Leaving my manhood on a rumpled field  
To guard you where you lie so deep  
In absent-mindedness,  
Caught in the calcium snows of sleep?

And even should I track you to your birth  
Through all the cities of your mortal trial,  
As in my jealous thought I try to do,  
You would escape me—from the brink of earth  
Take off to where the lawless auroras run,  
You with your wild and metaphysic heart.  
My touch is on you, who are light-years gone.  
We are not souls but systems, and we move  
In clouds of our unknowing  
like great nebulae.

Our very motives swirl and have their start  
With father lion and with mother crab.



Dreamer, my own lost rib,  
Whose planetary dust is blowing  
Past archipelagoes of myth and light,  
What far Magellans are you mistress of  
To whom you speed the pleasure of your art?  
As through a glass that magnifies my loss  
I see the lines of your spectrum shifting red,  
The universe expanding, thinning out,  
Our worlds flying, oh flying, fast apart.

From hooded powers and from abstract flight  
I summon you, your person and your pride.  
Fall to me now from outer space,  
Still fastened desperately to my side;  
Through gulfs of streaming air  
Bring me the mornings of the milky ways  
Down to my threshold in your drowsy eyes;  
And by the virtue of your honeyed word  
Restore the liquid language of the moon,  
That in gold mines of secrecy you delve.  
Awake!

My whirling hands stay at the noon,  
Each cell within my body holds a heart  
And all my hearts in unison strike twelve.

*Dreams as a source of understanding have always figured importantly in poetry. The dream recorded here, which, actual or imagined, comes to the same thing, recapitulates a man's personal history and his arrival, just before waking, at wisdom that nevertheless involves the deepest sense of loss. Gemara is that part of the Talmud, the Jewish civil and canonical law, that serves as commentary on the Mishnah, or text.*

FATHER AND SON

Now in the suburbs and the falling light  
I followed him, and now down sandy road  
Whiter than bone-dust, through the sweet  
Curdle of fields, where the plums  
Dropped with their load of ripeness, one by one.  
Mile after mile I followed, with skimming feet,  
After the secret master of my blood,  
Him, steeped in the odor of ponds, whose indomitable love  
Kept me in chains. Strode years; stretched into bird;  
Raced through the sleeping country where I was young,  
The silence unrolling before me as I came,  
The night nailed like an orange to my brow.

How should I tell him my fable and the fears,  
How bridge the chasm in a casual tone,  
Saying, "The house, the stucco one you built,  
We lost. Sister married and went from home,  
And nothing comes back, it's strange, from where she goes.  
I lived on a hill that had too many rooms:  
Light we could make, but not enough of warmth,  
And when the light failed, I climbed under the hill.  
The papers are delivered every day;  
I am alone and never shed a tear."

At the water's edge, where the smothering ferns lifted  
Their arms, "Father!" I cried, "Return! You know  
The way. I'll wipe the mudstains from your clothes;  
No trace, I promise, will remain. Instruct  
Your son, whirling between two wars,  
In the Gemara of your gentleness,  
For I would be a child to those who mourn  
And brother to the foundlings of the field  
And friend of innocence and all bright eyes.  
O teach me how to work and keep me kind."

Among the turtles and the lilies he turned to me  
The white ignorant hollow of his face.



**JOSEPH LANGLAND**, *born 1917, in Spring Grove, Minnesota, lives with his wife and children in Amherst, Massachusetts, where he is a member of the English department of the University of Massachusetts. Of second-generation Norwegian-American parentage, he was brought up on a Midwestern farm, attended the State University of Iowa, and served for four years in the United States Army. He has taught at the University of Wyoming and, for the greater part of a year, lived with his family in Positano, Italy.*

THE hooded reptile, in his guile,  
Knows how to dance and how to smile.

Some say he merely writhes and grins  
Through solemn subtleties of sins,

But look, his jeweled body turns  
To rings and bracelets in the ferns.

He grazes on the velvet grasses  
With coral feet, then dewlike passes

Flickering on the darkling ground  
In neural sandals of no sound.

Glimpsed at the lily pool, he glides  
Serene among its undertides

And wakes soft ripples into bells  
Of water sepulchered in shells;

So kissed, he resurrects his head  
Above the broad-leafed lily bed

And blasts the ivory blooms among  
Pale whispered powders of his tongue.

Standing in water like a spring  
Long-coiled for Satan's underling,

Spinning through subterranean loves,  
Feeding upon pure lily groves,

He makes an ikon with his thin  
Needle of spiraled medicine.

Seductive, convoluted, poised,  
He equals elements, unvoiced

Except for one hushed song of death,  
A sudden exodus of breath.

And now he floats and slides and soars,  
Glistening, upon the further shores

And waves toward Calvary, his gloss  
All intersected in a cross;

There, hung in haloes, all amazed,  
So slyly caught, so subtly praised,

Fleeing among his purple stings  
Love dances, smiles. Oh, how he sings!

## W A R

**W**HEN my young brother was killed  
By a mute and dusty shell in the thorny brush  
Crowning the boulders of the Villa Verde Trail  
On the island of Luzon,

I laid my whole dry body down,  
Dropping my face like a stone in a green park  
On the east banks of the Rhine;

On an airstrip skirting the Seine  
His sergeant brother sat like a stick in his barracks  
While cracks of fading sunlight  
Caged the dusty air;

In the rocky rolling hills west of the Mississippi  
His father and mother sat in a simple Norwegian parlor  
With a photograph smiling between them on the table  
And their hands fallen into their laps  
Like sticks and dust;

And still other brothers and sisters,  
Linking their arms together,  
Walked down the dusty road where once he ran  
And into the deep green valley  
To sit on the stony banks of the stream he loved  
And let the murmuring waters  
Wash over their blood-hot feet with a springing crown of tears.

**PHILIP LARKIN**, *born August 9, 1922, in Coventry, England, lives in Hull, where he is librarian of*



*the university. He was educated at the King Henry VIII School, Coventry and St. John's College, Oxford, and has published a novel, A Girl in Winter.*



SOMETIMES you hear, fifth-hand,  
 As epitaph:  
*He chucked up everything*  
*And just cleared off,*  
 And always the voice will sound  
 Certain you approve  
 This audacious, purifying,  
 Elemental move.

And they are right, I think.  
 We all hate home  
 And having to be there:  
 I detest my room,  
 Its specially-chosen junk,  
 The good books, the good bed,  
 And my life, in perfect order:  
 So to hear it said

*He walked out on the whole crowd*  
 Leaves me flushed and stirred,  
 Like *Then she undid her dress*  
 Or *Take that you bastard;*  
 Surely I can, if he did?  
 And that helps me stay  
 Sober and industrious.  
 But I'd go today,

Yes, swagger the nut-strewn roads,  
 Crouch in the fo'c'sle  
 Stubbly with goodness, if  
 It weren't so artificial,  
 Such a deliberate step backwards

To create an object:  
Books; china; a life  
Reprehensibly perfect.

## CHURCH GOING

ONCE I am sure there's nothing going on  
I step inside, letting the door thud shut.  
Another church: matting, seats, and stone,  
And little books; sprawlings of flowers, cut  
For Sunday, brownish now; some brass and stuff  
Up at the holy end; the small neat organ;  
And a tense, musty unignorable silence,  
Brewed God knows how long. Hatless, I take off  
My cycle-clips in awkward reverence,  
  
Move forward, run my hand around the font.  
From where I stand, the roof looks almost new—  
Cleaned, or restored? Someone would know: I don't.  
Mounting the lectern, I peruse a few  
Hectoring large-scale verses, and pronounce  
'Here endeth' much more loudly than I'd meant.  
The echoes snigger briefly. Back at the door  
I sign the book, donate an Irish sixpence,  
Reflect the place was not worth stopping for.

Yet stop I did: in fact I often do,  
And always end much at a loss like this,  
Wondering what to look for; wondering, too,  
When churches fall completely out of use  
What we shall turn them into; if we shall keep  
A few cathedrals chronically on show,

Their parchment, plate and pyx in locked cases,  
And let the rest rent-free to rain and sheep.  
Shall we avoid them as unlucky places?

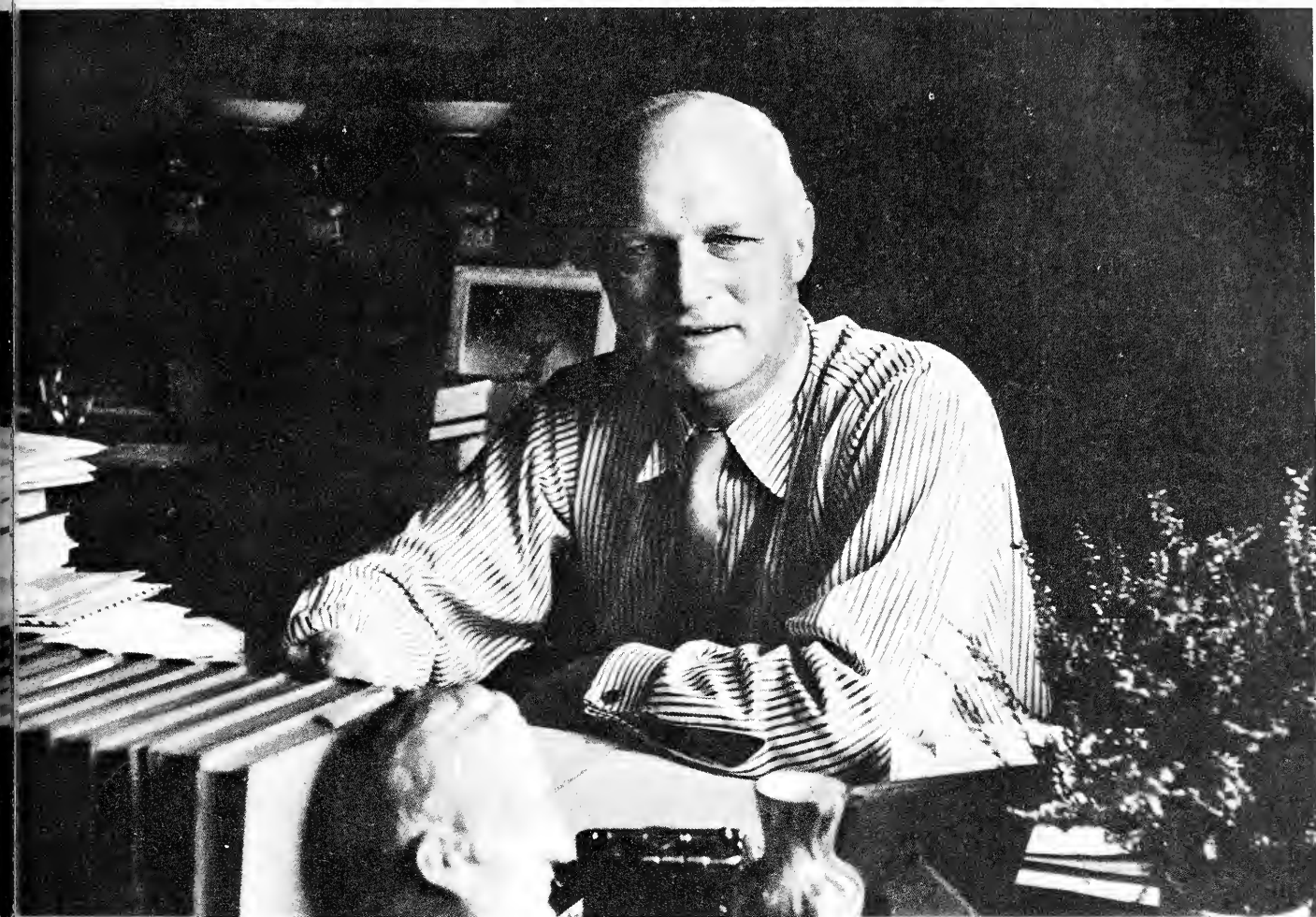
Or, after dark, will dubious women come  
To make their children touch a particular stone;  
Pick simples for a cancer; or on some  
Advised night see walking a dead one?  
Power of some sort or other will go on  
In games, in riddles, seemingly at random;  
But superstition, like belief, must die,  
And what remains when disbelief has gone?  
Grass, weedy pavement, brambles, buttress, sky,

A shape less recognisable each week,  
A purpose more obscure. I wonder who  
Will be the last, the very last, to seek  
This place for what it was; one of the crew  
That tap and jot and know what rood-lofts were?  
Some ruin-bibber, randy for antique,  
Or Christmas-addict, counting on a whiff  
Of gown-and-bands and organ-pipes and myrrh?  
Or will he be my representative,

Bored, uninformed, knowing the ghostly silt  
Dispersed, yet tending to this cross of ground  
Through suburb scrub because it held unspilt  
So long and equably what since is found  
Only in separation—marriage, and birth,  
And death, and thoughts of these—for whom was built  
This special shell? For, though I've no idea  
What this accoutred frowsty barn is worth,  
It pleases me to stand in silence here;

A serious house on serious earth it is,  
In whose blent air all our compulsions meet,

Are recognised, and robed as destinies.  
And that much never can be obsolete,  
Since someone will forever be surprising  
A hunger in himself to be more serious,  
And gravitating with it to this ground,  
Which, he once heard, was proper to grow wise in,  
If only that so many dead lie round.



**JOHN LEHMANN**, born 1907, at Bourne End, in the Thames valley, of an English father and an American mother, lives in London, where until 1961 he was editor of *The London Magazine*. He was educated at Eton and Trinity College, Cambridge, and then began a long and distinguished editorial career in which, among many other related activities, he founded the Penguin New Writing and served as managing director of The Hogarth Press in association with its owners, Leonard and Virginia Woolf. He has two famous sisters: Rosamond, the novelist, and Beatrix, the actress. His autobiography was published in two volumes under the titles *The Listening Gallery* and *I Am My Brother*.

HE sent us letters, which we read  
Drinking our coffee by the lake,  
And when we heard the promised day  
And which express he planned to take,

A quickened silence fell on all:  
Could we believe that it was true?  
Under the ridge the water seemed  
To gleam a deeper peacock blue.

Great were our plans to greet this friend  
So long a legend to our love,  
And while we filled his room with flowers  
And sent for cakes and wine, we strove

Each to recapture from the past  
A glance, a gesture that would bring  
His clear-eyed presence out of night:  
But it was hard remembering.

Then on the morning of the feast  
A cable came: we were afraid:  
There was no other news, except  
Once more his journey was delayed.

So far away it sinks, the dream  
That flushed our days, and made us one;  
The long weeks melted, and the guests  
Packed as each end came and were gone.

The young explorer was the first:  
O that was sharp: he seemed to make  
A furrow on our hearts that hour  
He rowed away across the lake;

And there were tears that had to flow  
Breaking on laughter in farewell,  
As down the vine-linked valley road  
Those comrades from the citadel

One afternoon of dust and songs  
Turned, and were swallowed in the glare;  
Yet still good-bye, though few remained  
Grew like a weed of rank despair,

Till I was left alone to meet  
(As I had always known must be)  
In the damp house, at summer's end,  
The dark Lieutenant from the sea.

**CECIL DAY LEWIS**, *born April 27, 1904, in Beallintogher, Ireland, lives with his second wife in London, where he is a director of the publishing house, Chatto and Windus. Educated at Oxford, he taught at schools in England and Scotland until 1935. During World War II he was an editor of books and pamphlets for the Ministry of Information and later returned to academic life first as a lecturer at Trinity College and then as professor of poetry at Oxford. He is widely known as the author of many expert detective stories, which he publishes under the pseudonym Nicholas Blake.*





*In the third and fourth stanzas of this poem there is  
an extended allusion to the Biblical story of the de-  
livery of the Israelites, under Moses, from  
imprisonment and bondage in Egypt to "a desert  
of freedom" and the Promised Land.*

DEPARTURE IN THE DARK

NOTHING so sharply reminds a man he is mortal  
As leaving a place  
In a winter morning's dark, the air on his face  
Unkind as the touch of sweating metal:  
Simple goodbyes to children or friends become  
A felon's numb  
Farewell, and love that was a warm, a meeting place—  
Love is the suicide's grave under the nettles.

Gloomed and clemmed as if by an imminent ice-age  
Lies the dear world  
Of your street-strolling, field-faring. The senses, curled  
At the dead end of a shrinking passage,  
Care not if close the inveterate hunters creep,  
And memories sleep  
Like mammoths in lost caves. Drear, extinct is the world,  
And has no voice for consolation or presage.

There is always something at such times of the passover,  
When the dazed heart  
Beats for it knows not what, whether you part  
From home or prison, acquaintance or lover—  
Something wrong with the time-table, something unreal  
In the scrambled meal  
And the bag ready packed by the door, as though the heart  
Has gone ahead, or is staying here forever.

No doubt for the Israelites that early morning  
It was hard to be sure  
If home were prison or prison home: the desire  
Going forth meets the desire returning.  
This land, that had cut their pride down to the bone  
Was now their own  
By ancient deeds of sorrow. Beyond, there was nothing sure  
But a desert of freedom to quench their fugitive yearnings.  
  
At this blind hour the heart is informed of nature's  
Ruling that man  
Should be nowhere a more tenacious settler than  
Among wry thorns and ruins, yet nurture  
A seed of discontent in his ripest ease.  
There's a kind of release  
And a kind of torment in every goodbye for every man—  
And will be, even to the last of his dark departures.

#### RECONCILIATION

ALL day beside the shattered tank he'd lain  
Like a limp creature hacked out of its shell,  
Now shrivelling on the desert's grid,  
Now floating above a sharp-set ridge of pain.  
  
There came a roar, like water, in his ear.  
The mortal dust was laid. He seemed to be lying  
In a cool coffin of stone walls,  
While memory slid towards a plunging weir.  
  
The time that was, the time that might have been  
Find in this shell of stone a chance to kiss  
Before they part eternally:  
He feels a world without, a world within

Wrestle like old antagonists, until each is  
Balancing each. Then, in a heavenly calm,  
The lock gates open, and beyond  
Appear the argent, swan-assembled reaches.

*The dead here are ordinary people who lived ordinary  
lives, unaware of the life of the intellect as represented  
by such world-shaking figures as Karl Marx  
and Sigmund Freud, and died in anonymous multitudes  
in the bombing of London. Speaking as one who is  
aware of philosophies and scientific discoveries that  
shape history, the poet pays homage to those who keep  
the world going simply by enduring the hazards of  
existence and the darkness of their own ignorance.*

#### THE DEAD

THEY lie in the sunday street  
Like effigies thrown down after a fête  
Among the bare-faced houses frankly yawning revulsion,  
Fag-ends of fires, litter of rubble, stale  
Confetti-sprinkle of blood. Was it defeat  
With them, or triumph? Purification  
Or All Fools' Day? On this they remain silent.  
Their eyes are closed to honour and hate.

We cannot blame the great  
Alone—the mad, the calculating or effete  
Rulers. Whatever grotesque scuffle and piercing  
Indignant orgasm of pain took them,  
All that enforced activity of death  
Did answer and compensate  
Some voluntary inaction, soft option, dream retreat.

Each man died for the sins of a whole world:  
For the ant's self-abdication, the fat-stock's patience  
Are sweet goodbye to human nations.

Still, they have made us eat  
Our knowing words, who rose and paid  
The bill for the whole party with their uncounted courage.  
And if they chose the dearer consolations  
Of living—the bar, the dog race, the discreet  
Establishment—and let Karl Marx and Freud go hang,  
Now they are dead, who can dispute their choice?  
Not I, nor even Fate.

#### IN THE HEART OF CONTEMPLATION

**I**N the heart of contemplation—  
Admiring, say, the frost-flowers of the white lilac,  
Or lark's song busily sifting like sand-crystals  
Through the pleased hourglass an afternoon of summer,  
Or your beauty, dearer to me than these—  
Discreetly a whisper in the ear,  
The glance of one passing my window recall me  
From lark, lilac, you, grown suddenly strangers.

In the plump and pastoral valley  
Of a leisure time, among the trees like seabirds  
Asleep on a glass calm, one shadow moves—  
The sly reminder of the forgotten appointment.  
All the shining pleasures, born to be innocent,  
Grow dark with a truant's guilt:  
The day's high heart falls flat, the oaks tremble,  
And the shadow sliding over your face divides us.

In the act of decision only,  
In the hearts cleared for action like lovers naked  
For love, this shadow vanishes: there alone  
There is nothing between our lives for it to thrive on.  
You and I with lilac, lark and oak-leafed  
Valley are bound together  
As in the astounded clarity before death.  
Nothing is innocent now but to act for life's sake.



**ROBERT LOWELL**, born March 1, 1917, in Boston, lives in New York with his wife, the writer Elizabeth Hardwick, and their young daughter. He went to Harvard for two years and then transferred to Kenyon College, where he was a student of John Crowe Ransom. During World War II he refused to register for the draft and was imprisoned as a conscientious objector. After his release, he lived with his first wife, the novelist Jean Stafford, in New York City and in Maine. In recent years he has taught in the English departments of Kenyon College and Boston University, and he is currently visiting professor at Harvard.

*Ford Madox Ford was an Anglo-German writer who, in the fanatical anti-German climate of World War I, changed his name from Hueffer to Ford. He wrote one outstanding novel, The Good Soldier, which turned to advantage innovations made by Flaubert and other French naturalists, but many of his other novels were mere potboilers. He befriended and encouraged many writers at the beginnings of their careers, even when he himself had outlived his reputation and fallen into poverty and neglect. In his last years he was often in New York, a wheezing gourmand and failing bon vivant who was habitually seen at the Brevoort Hotel, the last resort of Edwardian grandeur in the city, in the neighborhood of both Washington Square and Stuyvesant Square.*

FORD MADOX FORD

1873–1939

THE lobbed ball plops, then dribbles to the cup . . . .  
(a birdie Fordie!) But it nearly killed  
the ministers. Lloyd George was holding up  
the flag. He gabbled, ‘Hop-toad, hop-toad, hop-toad!  
Hueffer has used a niblick on the green;  
it’s filthy art, Sir, filthy art!’  
You answered, ‘What is art to me and thee?  
Will a blacksmith teach a midwife how to bear?’  
That cut the puffing statesman down to size,  
Ford. You said, ‘Otherwise,  
I would have been general of a division.’ Ah Ford!  
Was it war, the sport of kings, that your *Good Soldier*,  
the best French novel in the language, taught  
those Georgian Whig magnificoes at Oxford,  
at Oxford decimated on the Somme?

Ford, five times black-balled for promotion,  
then mustard gassed voiceless some seven miles  
behind the lines at Nancy or Belleau Wood:  
you emerged in your 'worn uniform,  
gilt dragons on the revers of the tunic,'  
a Jonah—O divorced, divorced  
from the whale-fat of post-war London! Boomed,  
cut, plucked and booted! In Provence, New York . . .  
marrying, blowing . . . nearly dying  
at Boulder, when the altitude  
pressed the world on your heart,  
and your audience, almost football-size,  
shrank to a dozen, while you stood  
mumbling, with fish-blue eyes,  
and mouth pushed out  
fish-fashion, as if you gagged for air . . . .  
Sandman! Your face, a childish O. The sun  
is pernod-yellow and it gilds the heirs  
of all the ages there on Washington  
and Stuyvesant, your Lilliputian squares,  
where writing turned your pockets inside out.  
But master, mammoth mumblor, tell me why  
the bales of your left-over novels buy  
less than a bandage for your gouty foot.  
Wheel-horse, O unforgetting elephant,  
I hear you huffing at your old Brevoort,  
Timon and Falstaff, while you heap the board  
for publishers. Fiction! I'm selling short  
your lies that made the great your equals. Ford,  
you were a kind man and you died in want.



*In the long view of this elegy, specific landmarks of the city of Boston are seen against a mythological background. Phillips House is a hospital. In Latin, the word cancer means crab, the fourth sign of the Zodiac. Charon is the mythical figure who ferried dead souls across the Styx, the chief river of the underworld. Acheron is the "river of woe" in Hades. This poem is one of four under the general title "In Memory of Arthur Winslow."*

DEATH FROM CANCER

THIS Easter, Arthur Winslow, less than dead,  
Your people set you up in Phillips' House  
To settle off your wrestling with the crab—  
The claws drop flesh upon your yachting blouse  
Until longshoreman Charon come and stab  
Through your adjusted bed  
And crush the crab. On Boston Basin, shells  
Hit water by the Union Boat Club wharf:  
You ponder why the coxes' squeakings dwarf  
The *resurrexit dominus* of all the bells.

Grandfather Winslow, look, the swanboats coast  
That island in the Public Gardens, where  
The bread-stuffed ducks are brooding, where with tub  
And strainer the mid-Sunday Irish scare  
The sun-struck shallows for the dusky chub  
This Easter, and the ghost  
Of risen Jesus walks the waves to run  
Arthur upon a trumpeting black swan  
Beyond Charles River to the Acheron  
Where the wide waters and their voyager are one.

THE old South Boston Aquarium stands  
in a Sahara of snow now. Its broken windows are boarded.  
The bronze weathervane cod has lost half its scales.  
The airy tanks are dry.

Once my nose crawled like a snail on the glass;  
my hand tingled  
to burst the bubbles,  
drifting from the noses of the cowed, compliant fish.

My hand draws back. I often sigh still  
for the dark downward and vegetating kingdom  
of the fish and reptile. One morning last March,  
I pressed against the new barbed and galvanized  
fence on the Boston Common. Behind their cage,  
yellow dinosaur steam shovels were grunting  
as they cropped up tons of mush and grass  
to gouge their underworld garage.

Parking lots luxuriate like civic  
sand piles in the heart of Boston.  
A girdle of orange, Puritan-pumpkin-colored girders  
braces the tingling Statehouse, shaking  
over the excavations, as it faces Colonel Shaw  
and his bell-cheeked Negro infantry  
on St. Gaudens' shaking Civil War relief,  
propped by a plank splint against the garage's earthquake.

Two months after marching through Boston,  
half the regiment was dead;  
at the dedication,  
William James could almost hear the bronze Negroes breathe.

The monument sticks like a fishbone  
in the city's throat.  
Its colonel is as lean  
as a compass needle.

He has an angry wrenlike vigilance,  
a greyhound's gentle tautness;  
he seems to wince at pleasure  
and suffocate for privacy.

He is out of bounds. He rejoices in man's lovely,  
peculiar power to choose life and die—  
when he leads his black soldiers to death,  
he cannot bend his back.

On a thousand small-town New England greens,  
the old white churches hold their air  
of sparse, sincere rebellion; frayed flags  
quilt the graveyards of the Grand Army of the Republic.

The stone statues of the abstract Union Soldier  
grow slimmer and younger each year—  
wasp-waisted, they doze over muskets,  
and muse through their sideburns.

Shaw's father wanted no monument  
except the ditch,  
where his son's body was thrown  
and lost with his "niggers."

The ditch is nearer.

There are no statues for the last war here;  
on Boylston Street, a commercial photograph  
showed Hiroshima boiling

over a Mosler Safe, "the Rock of Ages,"  
that survived the blast. Space is nearer.

When I crouch to my television set,  
the drained faces of Negro school children rise like balloons.

Colonel Shaw  
is riding on his bubble,  
he waits  
for the blessed break.

The Aquarium is gone. Everywhere,  
giant finned cars nose forward like fish;  
a savage servility  
slides by on grease.

*Mr. Edwards, the speaker in this poem, is Jonathan Edwards, the great Calvinist theologian and preacher whose zeal was largely responsible for the religious revival in New England known as the Great Awakening. He was born in what is now Windsor, Connecticut, and as a child demonstrated his great aptitude as a naturalist by writing a series of scientific observations on the spider. In this poem, reminiscent of one of his famous sermons, Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God, he particularly addresses Josiah Hawley, a Revolutionary patriot who was one of the leaders of the opposition to Edwards' fiery revivalist preachings.*

#### MR. EDWARDS AND THE SPIDER

I SAW the spiders marching through the air,  
Swimming from tree to tree that mildewed day  
In latter August when the hay  
Came creaking to the barn. But where  
The wind is westerly,  
Where gnarled November makes the spiders fly  
Into the apparitions of the sky,  
They purpose nothing but their ease and die  
Urgently beating east to sunrise and the sea;

What are we in the hands of the great God?  
It was in vain you set up thorn and briar  
    In battle array against the fire  
    And treason crackling in your blood;  
        For the wild thorns grow tame  
And will do nothing to oppose the flame;  
Your lacerations tell the losing game  
You play against a sickness past your cure.  
How will the hands be strong? How will the heart endure?

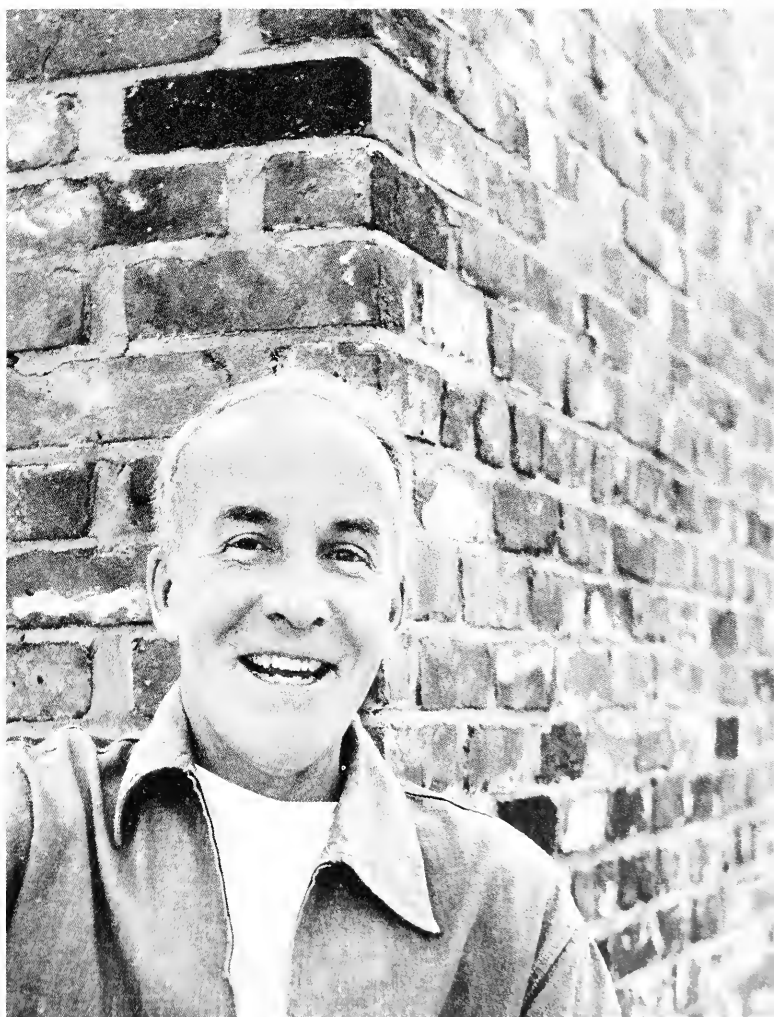
A very little thing, a little worm,  
Or hourglass-blazoned spider, it is said,  
    Can kill a tiger. Will the dead  
    Hold up his mirror and affirm  
        To the four winds the smell  
And flash of his authority? It's well  
If God who holds you to the pit of hell,  
Much as one holds a spider, will destroy,  
Baffle and dissipate your soul. As a small boy

On Windsor Marsh, I saw the spider die  
When thrown into the bowels of fierce fire:  
    There's no long struggle, no desire  
    To get up on its feet and fly—  
        It stretches out its feet  
And dies. This is the sinner's last retreat;  
Yes, and no strength exerted on the heat  
Then sinews the abolished will, when sick  
And full of burning, it will whistle on a brick.

But who can plumb the sinking of that soul?  
Josiah Hawley, picture yourself cast  
    Into a brick-kiln where the blast  
    Fans your quick vitals to a coal—  
        If measured by a glass,

How long would it seem burning! Let there pass  
A minute, ten, ten trillion; but the blaze  
Is infinite, eternal: this is death,  
To die and know it. This is the Black Widow, death.

**ARCHIBALD MACLEISH,**  
*born May 7, 1892, in Glencoe,  
Illinois, lives with his wife in  
Cambridge, Massachusetts,  
where until recently he was  
Boylston Professor of Rhetoric  
and Oratory at Harvard, and for  
part of each year in Antigua,  
British West Indies. He was  
educated at Yale and the Har-  
vard Law School, served in the  
Field Artillery in France during  
World War I, practiced law in  
Boston, and later became an  
editor of Fortune. During the  
administration of Franklin D.  
Roosevelt he was, successively,  
Librarian of Congress and  
Undersecretary of State. Among  
his writings are a number of  
radio and television plays, the  
poetic dramas Panic and J.B.,  
and works of a documentary  
nature.*



*The "cue" or point of departure for this poem is Andrew Marvell's famous love poem "To His Coy Mistress." Time and eternity, represented by the movement of the sun, is a theme common to these poems, both of which are otherwise concerned with human awareness. Geographically, the point from which the westward passage of night is observed is the southwestern shore of Lake Michigan.*

YOU, ANDREW MARVELL

AND here face down beneath the sun  
And here upon earth's noonward height  
To feel the always coming on  
The always rising of the night:

To feel creep up the curving east  
The earthy chill of dusk and slow  
Upon those under lands the vast  
And ever climbing shadow grow

And strange at Ecbatan the trees  
Take leaf by leaf the evening strange  
The flooding dark about their knees  
The mountains over Persia change

And now at Kermanshah the gate  
Dark empty and the withered grass  
And through the twilight now the late  
Few travelers in the westward pass

And Baghdad darken and the bridge  
Across the silent river gone  
And through Arabia the edge  
Of evening widen and steal on



And deepen on Palmyra's street  
The wheel rut in the ruined stone  
And Lebanon fade out and Crete  
High through the clouds and overblown

And over Sicily the air  
Still flashing with the landward gulls  
And loom and slowly disappear  
The sails above the shadowy hulls

And Spain go under and the shore  
Of Africa the gilded sand  
And evening vanish and no more  
The low pale light across that land

Nor now the long light on the sea:

And here face downward in the sun  
To feel how swift how secretly  
The shadow of the night comes on . . .

“NOT MARBLE NOR THE GILDED MONUMENTS”

For Adele

**T**HE praisers of women in their proud and beautiful poems,  
Naming the grave mouth and the hair and the eyes,  
Boasted those they loved should be forever remembered:  
These were lies.

The words sound but the face in the Istrian sun is forgotten.  
The poet speaks but to her dead ears no more.  
The sleek throat is gone—and the breast that was troubled to listen:  
Shadow from door.

Therefore I will not praise your knees nor your fine walking  
Telling you men shall remember your name as long  
As lips move or breath is spent or the iron of English  
Rings from a tongue.

I shall say you were young, and your arms straight, and your mouth  
scarlet:

I shall say you will die and none will remember you:  
Your arms change, and none remember the swish of your garments,  
Nor the click of your shoe.

Not with my hand's strength, not with difficult labor  
Springing the obstinate words to the bones of your breast  
And the stubborn line to your young stride and the breath to your  
breathing  
And the beat to your haste  
Shall I prevail on the hearts of unborn men to remember.

(What is a dead girl but a shadowy ghost  
Or a dead man's voice but a distant and vain affirmation  
Like dream words most)

Therefore I will not speak of the undying glory of women.  
I will say you were young and straight and your skin fair  
And you stood in the door and the sun was a shadow of leaves on your  
shoulders  
And a leaf on your hair—

I will not speak of the famous beauty of dead women:  
I will say the shape of a leaf lay once on your hair.  
Till the world ends and the eyes are out and the mouths broken  
Look! It is there!

**LOUIS MACNEICE**, *born September 12, 1907, in Belfast, Ireland, lives in London, where he is program director for the BBC. He was educated at Merton College, Oxford, and later had a brief teaching career as a lecturer in Greek in London. His early poetry is identified with that of his friends*



*in the "English Group"—Spender, Lewis, and Auden—and with the last he is coauthor of the travel book Letters from Iceland. He has lived for extended periods in Greece; in 1954 he made a reading and concert tour in the United States with his second wife, the singer Hedli Anderson.*

*An aspect of this poem not to be overlooked is its unusual rhyme scheme: while the stanzas follow a familiar pattern, the last words of lines 1 and 3 also rhyme with the first words in lines 2 and 4.*

*"Egypt" is a reference to Cleopatra as she is addressed by Mark Antony in Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra (IV: xv, 41). MacNeice's line echoes Shakespeare's "I am dying, Egypt, dying" and strengthens the point of the poem by supplying a famous instance of death faced with resignation and nobility.*

#### THE SUNLIGHT ON THE GARDEN

THE sunlight on the garden  
Hardens and grows cold,  
We cannot cage the minute  
Within its nets of gold;  
When all is told  
We cannot beg for pardon.

Our freedom as free lances  
Advances towards its end;  
The earth compels, upon it  
Sonnets and birds descend;  
And soon, my friend,  
We shall have no time for dances.

The sky was good for flying  
Defying the church bells  
And every evil iron  
Siren and what it tells:  
The earth compels,  
We are dying, Egypt, dying

And not expecting pardon,  
Hardened in heart anew,

But glad to have sat under  
Thunder and rain with you,  
And grateful too  
For sunlight on the garden.

MORNING SUN

S HUTTLES of trains going north, going south, drawing threads of blue,  
The shining of the lines of trams like swords,  
Thousands of posters asserting a monopoly of the good, the beautiful,  
the true,  
Crowds of people all in the vocative, you and you,  
The haze of the morning shot with words.

Yellow sun comes white off the wet streets but bright  
Chromium yellows in the gay sun's light,  
Filletted sun streaks the purple mist,  
Everything is kissed and reticulated with sun  
Scooped-up and cupped in the open fronts of shops  
And bouncing on the traffic that never stops.

And the street fountain blown across the square  
Rainbow-trellises the air and sunlight blazons  
The red butcher's and scrolls of fish on marble slabs,  
Whistled bars of music crossing silver sprays  
And horns of cars, touché, touché, rapiers' retort, a moving cage,  
A turning page of shine and sound, the day's maze.

But when the sun goes out, the streets go cold, the hanging meat  
And tiers of fish are colourless and merely dead,  
And the hoots of cars neurotically repeat and the tiptoed feet  
Of women hurry and falter whose faces are dead;  
And I see in the air but not belonging there

The blown grey powder of the fountain grey as the ash  
That forming on a cigarette covers the red.

PRAYER BEFORE BIRTH

*Even poisons praise thee.*—George Herbert

I AM not yet born; O hear me.

Let not the bloodsucking bat or the rat or the stoat or the  
club-footed ghoul come near me.

I am not yet born, console me.

I fear that the human race may with tall walls wall me,  
with strong drugs dope me, with wise lies lure me,  
on black racks rack me, in blood-baths roll me.

I am not yet born; provide me

With water to dandle me, grass to grow for me, trees to talk  
to me, sky to sing to me, birds and a white light  
in the back of my mind to guide me.

I am not yet born; forgive me

For the sins that in me the world shall commit, my words  
when they speak me, my thoughts when they think me,  
my treason engendered by traitors beyond me,  
my life when they murder by means of my  
hands, my death when they live me.

I am not yet born; rehearse me

In the parts I must play and the cues I must take when  
old men lecture me, bureaucrats hector me, mountains  
frown at me, lovers laugh at me, the white  
waves call me to folly and the desert calls  
me to doom and the beggar refuses  
my gift and my children curse me.

I am not yet born; O hear me,  
Let not the man who is beast or who thinks he is God  
come near me.

I am not yet born; O fill me  
With strength against those who would freeze my  
humanity, would dragoon me into a lethal automaton,  
would make me a cog in a machine, a thing with  
one face, a thing, and against all those  
who would dissipate my entirety, would  
blow me like thistledown hither and  
thither or hither and thither  
like water held in the  
hands would spill me.

Let them not make me a stone and let them not spill me.  
Otherwise kill me.



**JAMES MERRILL**, *born March 3, 1926, in New York City, lives in the old seaport village of Stonington, Connecticut. He is a graduate of Amherst College, where, for one year, he was a member of the English department. He has published a novel, The Seraglio, and his play The Immortal Husband was produced off Broadway. A world traveler, he has spent long periods of residence abroad, particularly in Greece and in Italy.*



“ONE is reminded of a certain person,”  
 Continued the parson, settling back in his chair  
 With a glass of port, “who sought to emulate  
 The sport of birds (it was something of a chore)  
 By climbing up on a kite. They found his coat  
 Two counties away; the man himself was missing.”

His daughters tittered: it was meant to be a lesson  
 To them—they had been caught kissing, or some such nonsense,  
 The night before, under the crescent moon.  
 So, finishing his pheasant, their father began  
 This thirty-minute discourse, ending with  
 A story improbable from the start. He paused for breath,  
 Having shown but a few of the dangers. However, the wind  
 Blew out the candles and the moon wrought changes  
 Which the daughters felt along their stockings. Then,  
 Thus persuaded, they fled to their young men  
 Waiting in the sweet night by the raspberry bed,  
 And kissed and kissed, as though to escape on a kite.

## LABORATORY POEM

CHARLES used to watch Naomi, taking heart  
 And a steel saw, open up turtles, live.  
 While she swore they felt nothing, he would gag  
 At blood, at the blind twitching, even after  
 The murky dawn of entrails cleared, revealing  
 Contours he knew, egg-yellows like lamps paling.  
 Well then. She carried off the beating heart  
 To the kymograph and rigged it there, a rag

In fitful wind, now made to strain, now stopped  
By her solutions tonic or malign  
Alternately in which it would be steeped.  
What the heart bore, she noted on a chart,  
For work did not stop only with the heart.  
He thought of certain human hearts, their climb  
Through violence into exquisite disciplines  
Of which, as it now appeared, they all expired.  
Soon she would fetch another and start over,  
Easy in the presence of her lover.

VOICES FROM THE OTHER WORLD

**P**RESENTLY at our touch the teacup stirred,  
Then circled lazily about  
From A to Z. The first voice heard  
(If they are voices, these mute spellers-out)  
Was that of an engineer

Originally from Cologne.  
Dead in his 22nd year  
Of cholera in Cairo, he had 'known  
No happiness.' He once met Goethe, though.  
Goethe had told him: *Persevere*.

Our blind hound whined. With that, a horde  
Of voices gathered above the Ouija board,  
Some childish and, you might say, blurred  
By sleep; one little boy  
Named Will, reluctant possibly in a ruff

Like a large-lidded page out of El Greco, pulled  
Back the arras for that next voice,  
Cold and portentous: 'All is lost.

Flee this house. Otto von Thurn und Taxis.  
Obey. You have no choice.'

Frightened, we stopped; but tossed  
Till sunrise striped the rumpled sheets with gold.  
Each night since then, the moon waxes,  
Small insects flit round a cold torch  
We light, that sends them pattering to the porch . . .

But no real Sign. New voices come,  
Dictate addresses, begging us to write;  
Some warn of lives misspent, and all of doom  
In ways that so exhilarate  
We are sleeping sound of late.

Last night the teacup shattered in a rage.  
Indeed, we have grown nonchalant  
Towards the other world. In the gloom here,  
Our elbows on the cleared  
Table, we talk and smoke, pleased to be stirred

Rather by buzzings in the jasmine, by the drone  
Of our own voices and poor blind Rover's wheeze,  
Than by those clamoring overhead,  
Obsessed or piteous, for a commitment  
We still have wit to postpone

Because, once looked at lit  
By the cold reflections of the dead  
Risen extinct but irresistible,  
Our lives have never seemed more full, more real,  
Nor the full moon more quick to chill.

**W. S. MERWIN**, *born September 30, 1927, in Pennsylvania, lives with his British wife in New York City and on a farm in the Lot, France. The son of a Presbyterian minister, he went to Princeton, where he majored in Romance languages. After his graduation he spent several years in France, Portugal, and Spain as a tutor and eventually went to England, where his early reputation as a poet was made. His translation of The Cid was published in 1961.*



WALKING out in the late March midnight  
 With the old blind bitch on her bedtime errand  
 Of ease stumbling beside me, I saw

At the hill's edge, by the blue flooding  
 Of the arc-lamps, and the moon's suffused presence  
 The first leaves budding pale on the thorn trees,

Uncurling with that crass light coming through them,  
 Like the translucent wings of insects  
 Dilating in the dampness of birth;

And their green seemed already more ghostly  
 Than the hour drowned beneath bells, and the city sleeping,  
 Or even than the month with its round moon sinking.

As a white lamb the month's entrance had been:  
 The day warm, and at night unexpectedly  
 An hour of soft snow falling silently,

Soon ceasing, leaving transfigured all traceries,  
 These shrubs and trees, in white and white shadows; silk screens  
 Where were fences. And all restored again in an hour.

And as a lamb, I could see now, it would go,  
 Breathless, into its own ghostliness,  
 Taking with it more than its tepid moon.

And here there would be no lion at all that is  
 The beast of gold, and sought as an answer,  
 Whose pure sign in no solution is,

But between its two lambs the month would have run  
 As its varying moon, all silver,  
 That is the colour of questions.

Oh there as it went was such a silence  
Before the water of April should be heard singing  
Strangely as ever under the knowing ground  
  
As fostered in me the motion of asking  
In hope of no answer that fated leaves,  
Sleep, or the sinking moon might proffer,  
  
And in no words, but as it seemed in love only  
For all breath, whose departing nature is  
The spirit of question, whatever least I knew,  
  
Whatever most I wondered. In which devotion  
I stayed until the bell struck and the silver  
Ebbbed before April, and might have stood unseizing  
  
Among answers less ghostly than the first leaves  
On the thorn trees, since to seize had been  
Neither to love nor to possess;  
  
While the old bitch nosed and winded, conjuring  
A congenial spot, and the constellations  
Sank nearer already, listing toward summer.

#### THE DRUNK IN THE FURNACE

FOR a good decade  
The furnace stood in the naked gulley, fireless  
And vacant as any hat. Then when it was  
No more to them than a hulking black fossil  
To erode unnoticed with the rest of the junk-hill  
By the poisonous creek, and rapidly to be added  
    To their ignorance,  
  
They were afterwards astonished  
To confirm, one morning, a twist of smoke like a pale

Resurrection, staggering out of its chewed hole,  
And to remark then other tokens that someone,  
Cosily bolted behind the eye-holed iron  
Door of the drafty burner, had there established  
His bad castle.

Where he gets his spirits  
It's a mystery. But the stuff keeps him musical:  
Hammer-and-anvilling with poker and bottle  
To his juggled bellowings, till the last groaning clang  
As he collapses onto the rioting  
Springs of a litter of car-seats ranged on the grates,  
To sleep like an iron pig.

In their tar-paper church  
On a text about stoke-holes that are sated never  
Their Reverend lingers. They nod and hate trespassers.  
When the furnace wakes, though, all afternoon  
Their witless offspring flock like piped rats to its siren  
Crescendo, and agape on the crumbling ridge  
Stand in a row and learn.



**MARIANNE MOORE**, born November 15, 1887, in St. Louis, Missouri, lives in Brooklyn, New York. She is a graduate of Bryn Mawr and for a brief time after college taught commercial subjects at the United States Indian school in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. For a number of years she was employed in the New York Public Library system and, from 1925 to 1929, was editor of *The Dial*, the most distinguished literary magazine of its time. She is the most honored of women poets in America and in recent years has made many reading appearances at colleges and universities. About her own work she has said: "To be trusted is an ennobling experience; and poetry is a peerless proficiency of the imagination. I prize it, but am myself an observer; I can see no reason for calling my work poetry except that there is no other category in which to put it."



*A Swedish country cart in Brooklyn, New York, "this city of freckled integrity," provides the anomaly on which this lively meditation is based. Gustavus Adolphus is the name of several kings of Sweden, one of whom was a contemporary of George Washington. Kracken, usually spelled kraken, is a fabulous Scandinavian sea monster. Dalgrén was a Swedish inventor who contributed to the improvement of lighthouses.*

A CARRIAGE FROM SWEDEN

THEY say there is a sweeter air  
where it was made, than we have here;  
a Hamlet's castle atmosphere.

At all events there is in Brooklyn  
something that makes me feel at home.

Noone may see this put-away  
museum-piece, this country cart  
that inner happiness made art;  
and yet, in this city of freckled  
integrity it is a vein

of resined straightness from north-wind  
hardened Sweden's once-opposed-to-  
compromise archipelago  
of rocks. Washington and Gustavus  
Adolphus, forgive our decay.

Seats, dashboard and sides of smooth gourd-  
rind texture, a flowered step, swan-  
dart brake, and swirling crustacean-  
tailed equine amphibious creatures  
that garnish the axle-tree! What

a fine thing! What unannoying  
romance! And how beautiful, she  
with the natural stoop of the  
snowy egret, gray-eyed and straight-haired,  
for whom it should come to the door,—

of whom it reminds me. The split  
pine fair hair, steady gannet-clear  
eyes and the pine-needled-path deer-  
swift step; that is Sweden, land of the  
free and the soil for a spruce-tree—

vertical though a seedling—all  
needles: from a green trunk, green shelf  
on shelf fanning out by itself.

The deft white-stockinged dance in thick-soled  
shoes! Denmark's sanctuaried Jews!

The puzzle-jugs and hand-spun rugs,  
the root-legged kracken shaped like dogs,  
the hanging buttons and the frogs  
that edge the Sunday jackets! Sweden,  
you have a runner called the Deer, who

When he's won a race, likes to run  
more; you have the sun-right gable-  
ends due east and west, the table  
spread as for a banquet; and the put-  
in twin vest-pleats with a fish-fin

effect when you need none. Sweden,  
what makes the people dress that way  
and those who see you wish to stay?

The runner, not too tired to run more  
at the end of the race? And that

cart, dolphin-graceful? A Dalgrén  
     lighthouse, self-lit? responsive and  
     responsible, I understand;  
 it's not pine-needle-paths that give spring  
 when they're run on, it's a Sweden  
  
 of moated white castles,—the bed  
     of densely grown flowers in an S  
     meaning Sweden and stalwartness,  
 skill, and a surface that says  
 Made in Sweden: carts are my trade.

*In the following annotations, Marianne Moore  
 suggests how phrases from her reading and obser-  
 vation are fitted, in the manner of mosaics,  
 into the text of her poem:*

"In America." Les Idéals de l'Éducation Française;  
 lecture, December 3, 1931, by M. Auguste Desclos,  
 Director-adjoint, Office National des Universités  
 et Écoles Françaises de Paris.

The singing tree. Each leaf was a mouth, and every  
 leaf joined in concert. *Arabian Nights*.

*Lux et veritas* (Yale); *Christo et ecclesiae*  
 (Harvard); sapient felici,—

"Science is never finished." Professor Einstein  
 to an American student; *New York Times*.

Jack Bookworm in Goldsmith's  
*The Double Transformation*.

A variety of hero: Emerson in *The American Scholar*;  
 "there can be no scholar without the heroic  
 mind;" "let him hold by himself; . . .  
 patient of neglect, patient of reproach."

The wolf. Edmund Burke, November, 1781, in  
 reply to Fox: "there is excellent wool on the

back of a wolf and therefore he must be  
sheared. . . . But will he comply?"

"Gives his opinion." Henry McBride in the *New York Sun*, December 12, 1931: "Dr. Valentiner . . . has the typical reserve of the student. He does not enjoy the active battle of opinion that invariably rages when a decision is announced that can be weighed in great sums of money. He gives his opinion firmly and rests upon that."

## THE STUDENT

"I  
IN America," began  
the lecturer, "everyone must have a  
degree. The French do not think that  
all can have it, they don't say everyone  
must go to college." We  
do incline to feel  
that although it may be unnecessary  
to know fifteen languages,  
one degree is not too much. With us, a  
school—like the singing tree of which  
the leaves were mouths singing in concert—is  
both a tree of knowledge  
and of liberty,—  
seen in the unanimity of college  
mottoes, *lux et veritas*,  
*Christo et ecclesiae, sapiet  
felici*. It may be that we  
have not knowledge, just opinions, that we  
are undergraduates,  
not students; we know  
we have been told with smiles, by expatriates

of whom we had asked "When will  
your experiment be finished?" "Science  
is never finished." Secluded  
from domestic strife, Jack Bookworm led a  
college life, says Goldsmith;  
and here also as  
in France or Oxford, study is beset with  
dangers,—with bookworms, mildews,  
and complaisancies. But someone in New  
England has known enough to say  
the student is patience personified,  
is a variety  
of hero, "patient  
of neglect and of reproach,"—who can "hold by  
himself." You can't beat hens to  
make them lay. Wolf's wool is the best of wool,  
but it cannot be sheared because  
the wolf will not comply. With knowledge as  
with the wolf's surliness,  
the student studies  
voluntarily, refusing to be less  
than individual. He  
"gives his opinion and then rests on it;"  
he renders service when there is  
no reward, and is too reclusive for  
some things to seem to touch  
him, not because he  
has no feeling but because he has so much.

*The following are the author's own notes to her poem:*

Bell T. leaflet, 1939, "*The World's Most Accurate Clocks*: In the Bell Telephone Laboratories in New York, in a 'time vault' whose temperature is maintained within 1/100 of a degree, at 41° centigrade, are the most accurate clocks in the world—the four quartz crystal clocks. . . . When properly cut and inserted in a suitable circuit, they will control the rate of electric vibration to an accuracy of one part in a million. . . . When you call MEridian 7-1212 for correct time you get it every 15 seconds."

Jean Giraudoux: "Appeler à l'aide d'un camouflage ces instruments fait pour la vérité qui sont la radio, le cinéma, la presse?" "J'ai traversé voilà un an des pays arabes où l'on ignorait encore que Napoléon était mort." *Une allocation radiodiffusée de M. Giraudoux aux Françaises à propos de Sainte Catherine*; the *Figaro*, November, 1939.

The cannibal Chronos. Rhea, mother of Zeus, hid him from Chronos who "devoured all his children except Jupiter (air), Neptune (water), and Pluto (the grave). These Time cannot consume." Brewer's *Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*.

#### FOUR QUARTZ CRYSTAL CLOCKS

THERE are four vibrators, the world's exactest clocks;  
and these quartz time-pieces that tell  
time intervals to other clocks,  
these worksless clocks work well;  
and all four, independently the  
same, are there in the cool Bell  
Laboratory time  
vault. Checked by a comparator with Arlington,  
they punctualize the "radio,

cinéma,” and “presse,”—a group the  
Giraudoux truth-bureau  
of hoped-for accuracy has termed  
“instruments of truth.” We know—  
as Jean Giraudoux says  
certain Arabs have not heard—that Napoleon  
is dead; that a quartz prism when  
the temperature changes, feels  
the change and that the then  
electrified alternate edges  
oppositely charged, threaten  
careful timing; so that  
this water-clear crystal as the Greeks used to say,  
this “clear ice” must be kept at the  
same coolness. Repetition, with  
the scientist, should be  
synonymous with accuracy.  
The lemur-student can see  
that an aye-aye is not  
an angwan-tíbo, potto, or loris. The sea-  
side burden should not embarrass  
the bell-buoy with the buoy-ball  
endeavoring to pass  
hotel patronesses; nor could a  
practiced ear confuse the glass  
eyes for taxidermists  
with eye-glasses from the optometrist. And as  
MERidian-7 1, 2  
1, 2 gives, each fifteenth second  
in the same voice, the new  
data—“The time will be” so and so—  
you realize that “when you  
hear the signal,” you’ll be

hearing Jupiter or jour pater, the day god—  
the salvaged son of Father Time—  
telling the cannibal Chronos  
(eater of his proxime  
newborn progeny) that punctual-  
ity is not a crime.





**HOWARD MOSS**, *born January 22, 1921, in New York, has been a lifelong resident of his native city and, for many years, an editor of The New Yorker. He was educated at the University of Michigan and the University of Wisconsin and then, for two years, taught at Vassar College. His play The Folding Green was produced by The Poets' Theatre in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1958, and his critical appreciation The Magic Lantern of Marcel Proust was published in 1962.*

*This poem is a tribute written on the death of Albert Einstein, the great modern physicist whose theories, especially in their relevance to the development of the atomic bomb and its more lethal variations, have influenced the life of everyone on earth. His own life was one of endearing simplicity, and yet it was shadowed by the irony that he who hated the misuses of science should have been largely responsible for making atomic warfare possible.*

THE GIFT TO BE SIMPLE

BREATHING something German at the end,  
Which no one understood, he died, a friend,  
Or so he meant to be, to all of us.  
Only the stars defined his radius;  
His life, restricted to a wooden house,  
Was in his head. He saw a fledgling fall.  
Two times he tried to nest it, but it fell  
Once more, and died; he wandered home again—  
We save so plain a story for great men.  
An angel in ill-fitting sweaters,  
Writing children naive letters,  
A violin player lacking vanities,  
A giant wit among the homilies—  
We have no parallel to that immense  
Intelligence.

But if he were remembered for the Bomb,  
As some may well remember him, such a tomb,  
For one who hated violence and ceremony  
Equally, would be a wasted irony.  
He flew to formal heavens from his perch,  
A scientist become his own research,  
And even if the flames were never gold

That lapped his body to an ash gone cold,  
Even if his death no trumpets tolled,  
    There is enough of myth inside the truth  
    To make a monument to fit him with;  
And since the universe is in a jar,  
There is no weeping where his heavens are,  
And I would remember, now the world is less,  
    His gentleness.

*Underwood is the brand name of a famous typewriter,  
and in this poem the word is used punningly to suggest  
that, beyond the office world of "blotters,  
folders,/ Memos, carbons, pencils, papers" is the  
world of the imagination and jungle freedom. All  
of this has been evoked by the sun through Venetian  
blinds, the sudden creation of a "harp of light" that  
transforms the pedestrian activity of an office and  
makes it lively with hazards and surprises.*

#### UNDERWOOD

FROM the thin slats of the Venetian blinds  
The sun has plucked a sudden metaphor:  
A harp of light, reflected on the floor,  
Disorients the chair and desk and door.  
Those much too delicate hands still tapping  
The Underwood seem now Hindu dancers  
Or five or ten young Balinese children  
Hopping up and down in a clearing where  
The striped light scrapes through bamboo seedlings  
And moves from skinny shade to thin veneer  
And changes as the harp of light is changing  
Its twanging image on the office floor,

Being so remarkably the blinding heir  
Of something that is not, and yet is, there.

Once I watched at the water cooler  
A face bent over the jet-thin water:  
The iris of the bent eye changed its color  
As if the water jet had stained it green;  
I saw the animal head's slight shudder,  
Lifted from the surface of that running stream.  
Tall branches then grew green in the hallway,  
Arching above a green-ferned pathway;  
A screen of green leaves hung in the doorway.  
Was that a mirror where I saw the beaked birds,  
The sluggish coffin of the alligator,  
The monkeys climbing up the sunlit tree trunks?  
Or did imagination, in that corridor,  
Create, like the harp, its sudden metaphor?

Inside that drawer, among the blotters, folders,  
Memos, carbons, pencils, papers,  
Is the youngest animal of all awaking  
In that coarse nest where he's been sleeping?  
If I should reach into that dangerous drawer,  
What singular teeth might pierce my skin?  
Of if he should leap, should I then kill him,  
And watch, where the harp had set its lightness,  
The marvelous animal blood go thin?

#### WATER ISLAND

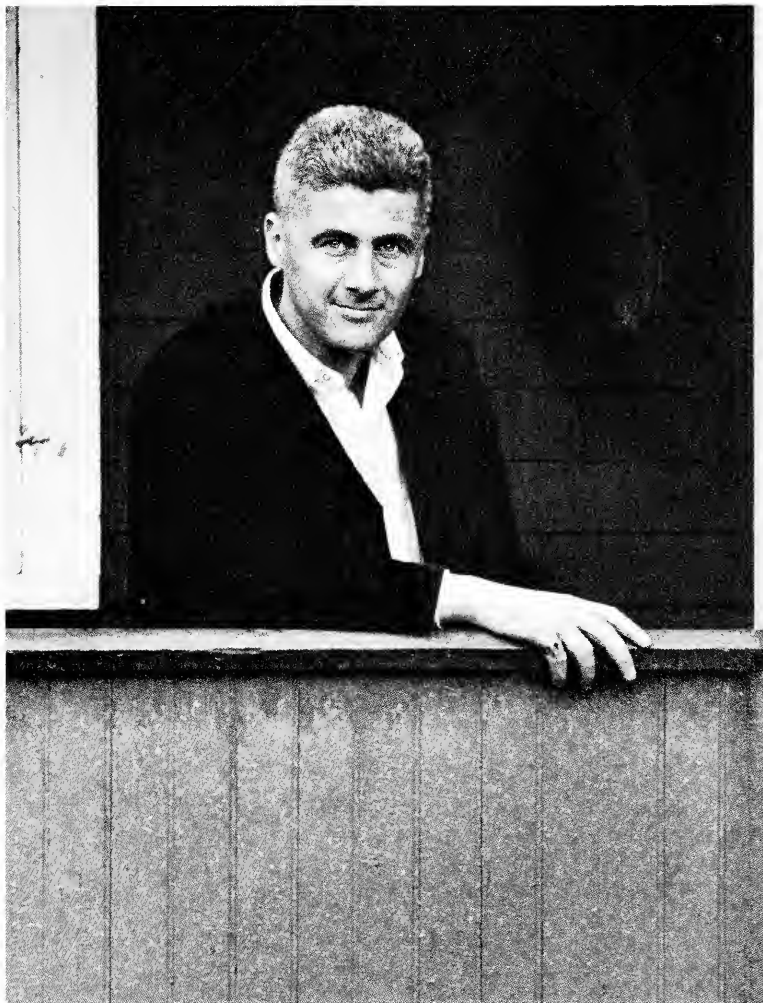
(To the memory of a friend, drowned off Water Island, April, 1960)

**F**INALLY, from your house there is no view;  
The bay's blind mirror shattered over you

And Patchogue took your body like a log  
The wind rolled up to shore. The senseless drowned  
Have faces nobody would care to see,  
But water loves those gradual erasures  
Of flesh and shoreline, greenery and glass,  
And you belonged to water, it to you,  
Having built, on a hillock, above the bay,  
Your house, the bay giving you reason to,  
Where now, if seasons still are running straight,  
The horseshoe crabs clank armor night and day,  
Their couplings far more ancient than the eyes  
That watched them from your porch. I saw one once  
Whose back was a history of how we live;  
Grown onto every inch of plate, except  
Where the hinges let it move, were living things,  
Barnacles, mussels, water weeds—and one  
Blue bit of polished glass, glued there by time:  
The origins of art. It carried them  
With pride, it seemed, as if endurance only  
Matters in the end. Or so I thought.

Skimming traffic lights, starboard and port,  
Steer through planted poles that mark the way,  
And other lights, across the bay, faint stars  
Lining the border of Long Island's shore,  
Come on at night, they still come on at night,  
Though who can see them now I do not know.  
Wild roses, at your back porch, break their blood,  
And bud to test surprises of sea air,  
And the birds fly over, gliding down to feed  
At the two feeding stations you set out with seed,  
Or splash themselves in a big bowl of rain  
You used to fill with water. Going across  
That night, too fast, too dark, no one will know,  
Maybe you heard, the last you'll ever hear,

The cry of the savage and endemic gull  
Which shakes the blood and always brings to mind  
The thought that death, the scavenger, is blind,  
Blunders and is stupid, and the end  
Comes with ironies so fine the seed  
Falters in the marsh and the heron stops  
Hunting in the weeds below your landing stairs,  
Standing in a stillness that now is yours.



**HOWARD NEMEROV**, born March 1, 1920, in New York City, lives with his wife and children in Bennington, Vermont, where he is on the faculty of Bennington College. He is a graduate of Harvard and, during World War II, served with the Royal Canadian Air Force and the United States Army Air Force in Canada and in England. In 1963 he was appointed to a term as Consultant in Poetry at the Library of Congress. He has published three novels: *The Melodramatists*; *Federigo, or the Power of Love*; and *The Homecoming Game*, which was adapted as a Broadway play, *Tall Story*, and later as a motion picture.

**M**Y son invites me to witness with him  
 a children's program, a series of cartoons,  
 on television. Addressing myself to share  
 his harmless pleasures, I am horrified  
 by the unbridled violence and hostility  
 of the imagined world he takes in stride,  
 where human beings dressed in the skins of mice  
 are eaten by portcullises and cowcatchers,  
 digested through the winding corridors  
 of organs, overshoes, boa constrictors  
 and locomotive boilers, to be excreted  
 in waters where shark and squid and abalone  
 wait to employ their tentacles and jaws.  
 It seems there is no object in this world  
 unable to become a gullet with great lonely teeth;  
 sometimes a set of teeth all by itself  
 comes clacking over an endless plain  
 after the moving mouse; and though the mouse  
 wins in the end, the tail of one cartoon  
 is spliced into the mouth of the next, where his  
 rapid and trivial agony repeats itself  
 in another form. My son has seen these things  
 a number of times, and knows what to expect;  
 he does not seem disturbed or anything more  
 than mildly amused. Maybe these old cartoons  
 refer to my childhood and not to his  
 (The ogres in them wear Mussolini's face),  
 so that when mice are swallowed by skeletons  
 or empty suits of armor, when a tribe  
 of savage Negro mice is put through a wringer  
 and stacked flat in the cellar, he can take  
 the objective and critical view, while I



am shaken to see the giant picassoid  
parents eating and voiding their little mice  
time and again. And when the cheery announcer  
cries, "Well, kids, that's the end," my son gets up  
obediently and runs outside to play.  
I hope he will ride over this world as well,  
and that his crudest and most terrifying dreams  
will not return with such wide publicity.

**BOOM !**

### *SEES BOOM IN RELIGION, TOO*

*Atlantic City, June 23, 1957 (AP).—President Eisenhower's pastor said tonight that Americans are living in a period of "unprecedented religious activity" caused partially by paid vacations, the eight-hour day and modern conveniences.*

*"These fruits of material progress," said the Rev. Edward L. R. Elson of the National Presbyterian Church, Washington, "have provided the leisure, the energy, and the means for a level of human and spiritual values never before reached."*

**H**ERE at the Vespasian-Carlton, it's just one  
religious activity after another; the sky  
is constantly being crossed by cruciform  
airplanes, in which nobody disbelieves  
for a second, and the tide, the tide  
of spiritual progress and prosperity  
miraculously keeps rising, to a level  
never before attained. The churches are full,  
the beaches are full, and the filling-stations  
are full, God's great ocean is full  
of paid vacationers praying an eight-hour day  
to the human and spiritual values, the fruits,  
the leisure, the energy, and the means, Lord,

the means for the level, the unprecedented level,  
and the modern conveniences, which also are full.  
Never before, O Lord, have the prayers and praises  
from belfry and phonebooth, from ballpark and barbecue  
the sacrifices, so endlessly ascended.

It was not thus when Job in Palestine  
sat in the dust and cried, cried bitterly;  
when Damien kissed the lepers on their wounds  
it was not thus; it was not thus  
when Francis worked a fourteen-hour day  
strictly for the birds; when Dante took  
a week's vacation without pay and it rained  
part of the time, O Lord, it was not thus.

But now the gears mesh and the tires burn  
and the ice chatters in the shaker and the priest  
in the pulpit, and Thy Name, O Lord,  
is kept before the public, while the fruits  
ripen and religion booms and the level rises  
and every modern convenience runneth over,  
that it may never be with us as it hath been  
with Athens and Karnak and Nagasaki,  
nor Thy sun for one instant refrain from shining  
on the rainbow Buick by the breezeway  
or the Chris Craft with the uplift life raft;  
that we may continue to be the just folks we are,  
plain people with ordinary superliners and  
disposable diaperliners, people of the stop'n'shop  
'n'pray as you go, of hotel, motel, boatel,  
the humble pilgrims of no deposit no return  
and please adjust thy clothing, who will give to Thee,  
if Thee will keep us going, our annual  
Miss Universe, for Thy Name's Sake, Amen.

**SYLVIA PLATH**, born October 27, 1932, in Boston, Massachusetts, died in London in 1963 by suicide. She was married to the English poet Ted Hughes by whom she had two children. Her death abruptly ended a brief and brilliant career as a poet that began at Smith College and continued at Newnham College, Cambridge, where she met her husband while she was spending a year abroad on a Fulbright fellowship.



ON the stiff twig up there  
 Hunches a wet black rook  
 Arranging and rearranging its feathers in the rain.  
 I do not expect miracle  
 Or an accident

To set the sight on fire  
 In my eye, nor seek  
 Any more in the desultory weather some design,  
 But let spotted leaves fall as they fall,  
 Without ceremony, or portent.

Although, I admit, I desire,  
 Occasionally, some backtalk  
 From the mute sky, I can't honestly complain:  
 A certain minor light may still  
 Leap incandescent

Out of kitchen table or chair  
 As if a celestial burning took  
 Possession of the most obtuse objects now and then—  
 Thus hallowing an interval  
 Otherwise inconsequent

By bestowing largesse, honour,  
 One might say love. At any rate, I now walk  
 Wary (for it could happen  
 Even in this dull, ruinous landscape); sceptical,  
 Yet politic; ignorant

Of whatever angel may choose to flare  
 Suddenly at my elbow. I only know that a rook  
 Ordering its black feathers can so shine  
 As to seize my senses, haul  
 My eyelids up, and grant

A brief respite from fear  
Of total neutrality. With luck,  
Trekking stubborn through this season  
Of fatigue, I shall  
Patch together a content  
Of sorts. Miracles occur,  
If you care to call those spasmodic  
Tricks of radiance miracles. The wait's begun again,  
The long wait for the angel,  
For that rare, random descent.

## THE COLOSSUS

I SHALL never get you put together entirely,  
Pieced, glued, and properly jointed.  
Mule-bray, pig-grunt and bawdy cackles  
Proceed from your great lips.  
It's worse than a barnyard.

Perhaps you consider yourself an oracle,  
Mouthpiece of the dead, or of some god or other.  
Thirty years now I have laboured  
To dredge the silt from your throat.  
I am none the wiser.

Scaling little ladders with gluepots and pails of lysol  
I crawl like an ant in mourning  
Over the weedy acres of your brow  
To mend the immense skull-plates and clear  
The bald, white tumuli of your eyes.

A blue sky out of the Oresteia  
Arches above us. O father, all by yourself  
You are pithy and historical as the Roman Forum.

I open my lunch on a hill of black cypress.  
Your fluted bones and acanthine hair are littered  
In their old anarchy to the horizon-line.  
It would take more than a lightning-stroke  
To create such a ruin.  
Nights, I squat in the cornucopia  
Of your left ear, out of the wind,  
Counting the red stars and those of plum-colour.  
The sun rises under the pillar of your tongue.  
My hours are married to shadow.  
No longer do I listen for the scrape of a keel  
On the blank stones of the landing.



**WILLIAM PLOMER**, *born December 10, 1903, in the Northern Transvaal, Africa, of English parents, lives in Rustington, Sussex. He was educated at Rugby and then returned to South Africa for a number of years, working as a farmer and a trader. Subsequently he spent two years in Japan and long periods in Greece before settling permanently in England. He is well known as a novelist and short-story writer, and as a writer of comic poetry he has established his own particular genre. He wrote the libretto for Benjamin Britten's opera Gloriana, performed during the coronation celebration for Queen Elizabeth II.*

*This poem is based upon an incident recorded in the memoirs of an Edwardian hostess, Mrs. Hwfa Williams, whose husband's given name is pronounced Hooper.*

A SHOT IN THE PARK

1

**I**N the light beneath the leafage  
In the afternoon in May  
In the Park and near the Row  
Gracefully from Hwfa  
Mrs. Hwfa Williams turned away,  
Saying 'Hwfa, I must go,  
I expect a mob for tea;  
Such fun, but I must fly—  
You dine, I think, with me?  
Till then, my dear, good-bye!'

Mrs. Hwfa Williams  
Twirled and furled her parasol,  
Lightly stepped into her carriage,  
Thinking it was all such fun—  
Life, and May, and marriage.

Such a pretty moment—  
How were they to figure  
Fate in ambush, taking aim,  
Finger on the trigger?

Later in a tea-gown talking  
Over twinkling tea-things on a tray  
(Hwfa in the Park still walking)  
She was heard to say:

'When my husband and I gave it out  
We should move to Great Cumberland Place



My sister-in-law gave a shriek—  
“My dears, you’ll be lost without trace!”  
And she said it with such a grimace!

“It’s so utterly out of the world!  
So fearfully wide of the mark!  
A Robinson Crusoe existence will pall  
On that unexplored side of the Park—  
Not a soul will be likely to call!”

Disparaging all one adores,  
Relations are such a disgrace;  
They gossip, as bluebottles buzz,  
They deplore what one is and one does—  
But they call at Great Cumberland Place!’

2

At home the tea-time tittle-tattle; in the Mall  
Two different orbits about to intersect.  
That a poor clerk and Mr. Hwfa Williams  
Should there converge nobody could expect  
And only a clairvoyant could foretell.

Gravely conferring with a crony, Hwfa  
On one side saunters; on the other glares  
A young man, seemingly a loafer,  
Whose small brain, infinitely busier than theirs,  
Has been inflamed by Post Office affairs.

*He* sends the telegrams that other people write;  
From overwork a breakdown now impends;  
Abrupt, elliptic phrases day and night he sends,  
Recurring in his fevered brain all day  
To be reiterated in his brain all night.

Now all’s confused, things are not what they seem,  
He stands bemused, as if he had been drinking;

Life is a cryptic, an intolerable dream—

RETURN TONIGHT AUNT HENRIETTA SINKING:  
CONGRATULATIONS DEAR FROM ALL AT CHEAM.

GLOXINIA WILTING ORDER PINK GERANIUM:  
TEN THOUSAND OFFERED SILLY NOT TO SELL:

Telegraphese tattoos upon his eardrums,  
Like red-hot tintacks drives into his cranium  
The public syntax of his private hell—

THANK YOU BOTH ENCHANTED:

OIL CONCESSION GRANTED:

HOPE ARRIVE NUNEATON TEN TO EIGHT:

ARRIVING SEVEN MABEL STOP:

DON'T SELL REFECTORY TABLE STOP:

CAT OUT OF BAG YOUR TELEGRAM TOO LATE.

Suddenly he sees two frock-coats passing,  
Two top-hats tilted in a tête-à-tête—  
These are to blame! Revenge upon the senders  
Of countless telegrams! He feels the uprush  
Of a delayed explosive charge of hate.

He draws and points a pistol, then he shoots.  
'Ouch!' cries Hwfa. Something has distressed him.  
He stumbles, mutters 'Somebody has shot me!'  
He falls. Blood falls upon his patent-leather boots,  
And cries go up, 'A murderer! Arrest him!'

3

In the light beneath the leafage  
Late that afternoon in May,  
In the Mall and on the ground  
Mr. Hwfa Williams lay,  
Happily not dead, but wounded.

'How do you feel?' they asked.  
'Injured,' he said, 'and quite astounded.'

Mr. Hwfa Williams  
 Was attended by a Dr. Fletcher,  
 And vexed, but bravely bland,  
 Was carried home upon a stretcher;  
 And  
 On Mr. Hwfa Williams' forehead  
 Mrs. Hwfa Williams laid a  
 Ministering angel's hand.  
 Later 'Hwfa', Mrs. Hwfa Williams said,  
 'Do you prefer the sofa to your bed?'

'My dear, I don't mind *where* I lie;  
 What *does* it signify  
 When not a living soul can tell me why,  
 About to cross St. James's Park  
 I'm picked on like a sitting pheasant  
 By, so they tell me, a demented clerk,  
 A truant from the G.P.O., Mount Pleasant?  
 Too many wires, they say, had turned his brain—  
 But why he turned on *me*—no, *that* they can't explain.'

4

'Good morning, have you heard the news?  
 You'll be amazed!' 'Well, what?'  
 'I nearly fainted when I read  
 That Hwfa Williams has been shot.'

'My dear, your coffee's getting cold—'  
 'Well, does it matter in the least?'  
 All over London in the morning  
 Breakfast was a headline feast.

'Now here is what the paper says:  
*A dastardly assault . . . the crime*  
*Seems without motive . . . an arrest was made . . .*  
*Alleged . . . admitted . . . passing at the time . . .*

*A grudge . . . dispatch of telegrams . . .*  
*Pistol discarded, lying in the mud . . .*  
*Enquiries made at Mr. Williams' home . . .*  
*Life not in danger . . . shock and loss of blood.*

No one is safe, it seems, these days:  
To stroll across St. James's Park  
Is to receive a bullet in the leg  
From some unhinged, ferocious clerk:

A little learning, as our fathers knew,  
Is certainly a dangerous thing;  
The lower orders have been spoilt,  
And now they mean to have their fling;

But though the world's upside down  
And England hastening to decay,  
Ring for the carriage; we'll enquire  
How Hwfa Williams is today.'

5

'Crikey!' said the butler, Crichton,  
'Blocking up the blooming street  
All these callers keep on calling—  
No one thinks of my poor feet!

All the toffs with all their questions,  
Leaving cards you can't refuse;  
These reporters, nosy parkers,  
Proper sharks they are for news.

I was not engaged to answer  
Bells that jangle all the time,  
These enquiries well might drive a  
Better man than me to crime:

*How's your master? Is he better?*  
*Is his life in danger still?*

*Is it true a gang attacked him?  
Do you think they shot to kill?*

*Can you tell us why they did it?  
Anarchists? A Fenian plot?*  
More of this and I'll go barmy,  
Like the lad that fired the shot.'

Carriage after carriage crowding,  
Kind enquirers choke the street:  
*How is Mr. Hwfa Williams?*  
'No one thinks of MY POOR FEET!'

6

'And so,' said Mrs. Hwfa Williams,  
Telling the story after years had passed,  
'It seemed that half of London came to call.  
Fruit, game and flowers came crowding thick and fast,

Cards like confetti rained into the hall—  
Such a great fuss, poor Hwfa was aghast  
Yet pleased, I think, at such extreme concern,  
More pleased than our old butler with it all—  
Poor Crichton hardly knew which way to turn.

The street was jammed, the knocker and the bell  
Clamoured together like two fiends in hell—  
And where was Crichton? Nobody could tell!  
At twelve o'clock my maid rushed in and said  
"Oh, ma'am, he's drinking quarts of brandy neat—  
Crichton's gone mad! I'll see to the front door!"  
Not mad but drunk I found him. Bursting into song  
With *Home Sweet Home*, he lurched and hit the floor.

Abject when sober, Crichton said his feet  
Had driven him off his head, nor had he known

That Hwfa's best old brandy was so strong . . .  
Hwfa forgave him, he had been with us so long.

He stayed for years . . . Poor man, his race is run . . .  
I also soon shall hear the sunset gun—  
But in between times life has been *such fun!*"

**EZRA POUND**, born *October 30, 1885, in Hailey, Idaho, lives with his wife, the former Dorothy Shakespeare, in Rapallo, Italy. He attended the University of Pennsylvania and Hamilton College, taught Romance languages for a brief time at Pennsylvania and at Wabash College in Indiana, and then went to Europe to begin a long and famous career as an expatriate. He first settled in London, where his skill as an editor and his zeal as a promoter of new forces in literature were given wide exercise. In 1924 he went to live in Italy and eventually became a propagandist for the Fascist regime, an activity that led to his being brought back to the United States in 1945 as a prisoner of the American Army on a charge of treason. When psychiatrists declared him mentally incompetent to stand trial, he was committed to St. Elizabeth's Hospital, in Washington, where he continued to work on his magnum opus, The Cantos. On the intercession of Robert Frost and others, he was released in 1958 and allowed to return to Italy. His dramatic history has been given wide publicity; yet he will most likely be remembered, not for his personal aberrations, but for his widely felt influence as a great craftsman on the course of poetry and the history of language.*

COME, my songs, let us express our baser passions,  
 Let us express our envy of the man with a steady job and no worry  
 about the future.

You are very idle, my songs.  
 I fear you will come to a bad end.  
 You stand about in the streets,  
 You loiter at the corners and bus-stops,  
 You do next to nothing at all.

You do not even express our inner nobilities,  
 You will come to a very bad end.

And I?

I have gone half cracked,  
 I have talked to you so much that  
 I almost see you about me,  
 Insolent little beasts, shameless, devoid of clothing!

But you, newest song of the lot,  
 You are not old enough to have done much mischief,  
 I will get you a green coat out of China  
 With dragons worked upon it,  
 I will get you the scarlet silk trousers  
 From the statue of the infant Christ in Santa Maria Novella,  
 Lest they say we are lacking in taste,  
 Or that there is no caste in this family.

COMMISSION

GO, my songs, to the lonely and the unsatisfied,  
 Go also to the nerve-racked, go to the enslaved-by-convention,  
 Bear to them my contempt for their oppressors.



Go as a great wave of cool water,  
Bear my contempt of oppressors.

Speak against unconscious oppression,  
Speak against the tyranny of the unimaginative,  
Speak against bonds.

Go to the bourgeoisie who is dying of her ennui,  
Go to the women in suburbs.

Go to the hideously wedded,  
Go to them whose failure is concealed,  
Go to the unluckily mated,  
Go to the bought wife,  
Go to the woman entailed.

Go to those who have delicate lust,  
Go to those whose delicate desires are thwarted,  
Go like a blight upon the dullness of the world;  
Go with your edge against this,  
Strengthen the subtle cords,  
Bring confidence upon the algae and the tentacles of the soul.

Go in a friendly manner,  
Go with an open speech.  
Be eager to find new evils and new good,  
Be against all forms of oppression.  
Go to those who are thickened with middle age,  
To those who have lost their interest.

Go to the adolescent who are smothered in family—  
Oh how hideous it is  
To see three generations of one house gathered together!  
It is like an old tree with shoots,  
And with some branches rotted and falling.

Go out and defy opinion,  
Go against this vegetable bondage of the blood.  
Be against all sorts of mortmain.

THE GARDEN

*En robe de parade.*—Samain

LIKE a skein of loose silk blown against a wall  
She walks by the railing of a path in Kensington Gardens,  
And she is dying piece-meal  
                    of a sort of emotional anaemia.

And round about there is a rabble  
Of the filthy, sturdy, unkillable infants of the very poor.  
They shall inherit the earth.

In her is the end of breeding.  
Her boredom is exquisite and excessive.  
She would like some one to speak to her,  
And is almost afraid that I  
                    will commit that indiscretion.

*The Sargasso Sea, an area in the Atlantic Ocean stretching northeast from the West Indies to the Azores, cradles the wreckage of thousands of ships that have sunk there as well as wreckage carried there by its far-ranging currents. This poem is based on one extended metaphor—a detailed comparison of the Sargasso Sea with the character and behavior of a London hostess.*

PORTRAIT D'UNE FEMME

YOUR mind and you are our Sargasso Sea,  
London has swept about you this score years  
And bright ships left you this or that in fee:  
Ideas, old gossip, oddments of all things,

Strange spars of knowledge and dimmed wares of price.  
Great minds have sought you—lacking someone else.  
You have been second always. Tragical?  
No. You preferred it to the usual thing:  
One dull man, dulling and uxorious,  
One average mind—with one thought less, each year.  
Oh, you are patient, I have seen you sit  
Hours, where something might have floated up.  
And now you pay one. Yes, you richly pay.  
You are a person of some interest, one comes to you  
And takes strange gain away:  
Trophies fished up; some curious suggestion;  
Fact that leads nowhere; and a tale or two,  
Pregnant with mandrakes, or with something else  
That might prove useful and yet never proves,  
That never fits a corner or shows use,  
Or finds its hour upon the loom of days:  
The tarnished, gaudy, wonderful old work;  
Idols and ambergris and rare inlays,  
These are your riches, your great store; and yet  
For all this sea-hoard of deciduous things,  
Strange woods half sodden, and new brighter stuff:  
In the slow float of differing light and deep,  
No! there is nothing! In the whole and all,  
Nothing that's quite your own.

Yet this is you.

#### THE RIVER-MERCHANT'S WIFE: A LETTER

WHILE my hair was still cut straight across my forehead  
I played about the front gate, pulling flowers.  
You came by on bamboo stilts, playing horse,

You walked about my seat, playing with blue plums.  
And we went on living in the village of Chokan:  
Two small people, without dislike or suspicion.

At fourteen I married My Lord you.  
I never laughed, being bashful.  
Lowering my head, I looked at the wall.  
Called to, a thousand times, I never looked back.

At fifteen I stopped scowling,  
I desired my dust to be mingled with yours  
Forever and forever and forever.  
Why should I climb the look out?

At sixteen you departed.  
You went into far Ku-to-yen, by the river of swirling eddies,  
And you have been gone five months.  
The monkeys make sorrowful noise overhead.

You dragged your feet when you went out.  
By the gate now, the moss is grown, the different mosses,  
Too deep to clear them away!  
The leaves fall early this autumn, in wind.  
The paired butterflies are already yellow with August  
Over the grass in the West garden;  
They hurt me. I grow older.  
If you are coming down through the narrows of the river Kiang,  
Please let me know beforehand,  
And I will come out to meet you  
As far as Cho-fu-sa.

*By Rihaku*



**JOHN CROWE RANSOM**, *born April 30, 1888, in Pulaski, Tennessee, lives in Gambier, Ohio, where he has for many years been professor of English at Kenyon College and editor of the Kenyon Review. He was educated at Vanderbilt University, where he was one of the group of poets who became known as the "Fugitives," and at Oxford, to which he went as a Rhodes scholar. His several books of criticism have been widely influential, and he has been mentor to many distinguished young poets, among them Robert Lowell, Randall Jarrell, and the late Edgar Bogardus.*

I  
 IN all the good Greek of Plato  
 I lack my roastbeef and potato.

A better man was Aristotle,  
 Pulling steady on the bottle.

I dip my hat to Chaucer,  
 Swilling soup from his saucer,

And to Master Shakespeare  
 Who wrote big on small beer.

The abstemious Wordsworth  
 Subsisted on a curd's-worth,

But a slick one was Tennyson,  
 Putting gravy on his venison.

What these men had to eat and drink  
 Is what we say and what we think.

The influence of Milton  
 Came wry out of Stilton.

Sing a song for Percy Shelley,  
 Drowned in pale lemon jelly,

And for precious John Keats,  
 Dripping blood of pickled beets.

Then there was poor Willie Blake,  
 He foundered on sweet cake.

God have mercy on the sinner  
 Who must write with no dinner,

No gravy and no grub,  
 No pewter and no pub,

No belly and no bowels,  
Only consonants and vowels.

DEAD BOY

THE little cousin is dead, by foul subtraction,  
A green bough from Virginia's aged tree,  
And none of the county kin like the transaction,  
Nor some of the world of outer dark, like me.

A boy not beautiful, nor good, nor clever,  
A black cloud full of storms too hot for keeping,  
A sword beneath his mother's heart—yet never  
Woman bewept her babe as this is weeping.

A pig with a pasty face, so I had said,  
Squealing for cookies, kinned by poor pretense  
With a noble house. But the little man quite dead,  
I see the forebears' antique lineaments.

The elder men have strode by the box of death  
To the wide flag porch, and muttering low send round  
The bruit of the day. O friendly waste of breath!  
Their hearts are hurt with a deep dynastic wound.

He was pale and little, the foolish neighbors say;  
The first-fruits, saith the Preacher, the Lord hath taken;  
But this was the old tree's late branch wrenched away,  
Grieving the sapless limbs, the shorn and shaken.

CAPTAIN Carpenter rose up in his prime  
 Put on his pistols and went riding out  
 But had got wellnigh nowhere at that time  
 Till he fell in with ladies in a rout.

It was a pretty lady and all her train  
 That played with him so sweetly but before  
 An hour she'd taken a sword with all her main  
 And twined him of his nose for evermore.

Captain Carpenter mounted up one day  
 And rode straightway into a stranger rogue  
 That looked unchristian but be that as may  
 The Captain did not wait upon prologue.

But drew upon him out of his great heart  
 The other swung against him with a club  
 And cracked his two legs at the shinny part  
 And let him roll and stick like any tub.

Captain Carpenter rode many a time  
 From male and female took he sundry harms  
 He met the wife of Satan crying "I'm  
 The she-wolf bids you shall bear no more arms."

Their strokes and counters whistled in the wind  
 I wish he had delivered half his blows  
 But where she should have made off like a hind  
 The bitch bit off his arms at the elbows.

And Captain Carpenter parted with his ears  
 To a black devil that used him in this wise  
 O Jesus ere his threescore and ten years  
 Another had plucked out his sweet blue eyes.



Captain Carpenter got up on his roan  
And sallied from the gate in hell's despite  
I heard him asking in the grimmest tone  
If any enemy yet there was to fight?

"To any adversary it is fame  
If he risk to be wounded by my tongue  
Or burnt in two beneath my red heart's flame  
Such are the perils he is cast among.

"But if he can he has a pretty choice  
From an anatomy with little to lose  
Whether he cut my tongue and take my voice  
Or whether it be my round red heart he choose."

It was the neatest knave that ever was seen  
Stepping in perfume from his lady's bower  
Who at this word put in his merry mien  
And fell on Captain Carpenter like a tower.

I would not knock old fellows in the dust  
But there lay Captain Carpenter on his back  
His weapons were the old heart in his bust  
And a blade shook between rotten teeth alack.

The rogue in scarlet and grey soon knew his mind  
He wished to get his trophy and depart  
With gentle apology and touch refined  
He pierced him and produced the Captain's heart.

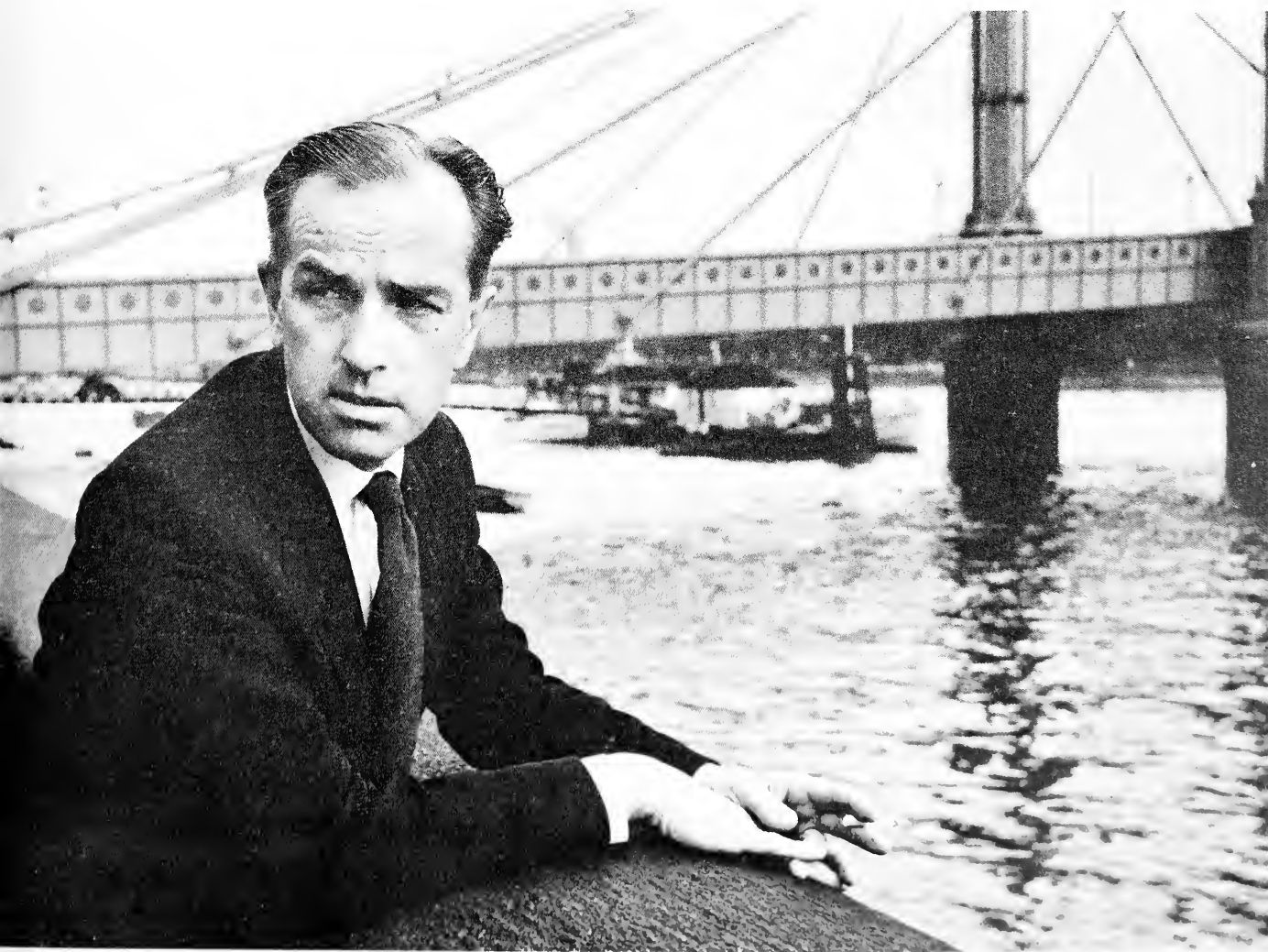
God's mercy rest on Captain Carpenter now  
I thought him Sirs an honest gentleman  
Citizen husband soldier and scholar enow  
Let jangling kites eat of him if they can.

But God's deep curses follow after those  
That shore him of his goodly nose and ears

His legs and strong arms at the two elbows  
And eyes that had not watered seventy years

The curse of hell upon the sleek upstart  
That got the Captain finally on his back  
And took the red red vitals of his heart  
And made the kites to whet their beaks clack clack.

**HENRY REED**, *born February 22, 1914, in Birmingham, England, lives in London, where he does free-lance work for newspapers and magazines as well as for radio and television. Although he is well known as a poet, he has published only one volume, A Map of Verona.*



*To read this poem properly, one must imagine the brusque voice of a drill sergeant as it is heard by a new recruit who is having difficulty in keeping his mind on instructions. Toward the end of the fourth line of every stanza but the last, the drill sergeant's voice abruptly gives way to the unspoken comments of the new soldier. In the fifth stanza, the recruit speaks for himself and rounds off his inner monologue.*

#### NAMING OF PARTS

TODAY we have naming of parts. Yesterday,  
We had daily cleaning. And tomorrow morning,  
We shall have what to do after firing. But today,  
Today we have naming of parts. Japonica  
Glistens like coral in all of the neighboring gardens,  
And today we have naming of parts.

This is the lower sling swivel. And this  
Is the upper sling swivel, whose use you will see,  
When you are given your slings. And this is the piling swivel,  
Which in your case you have not got. The branches  
Hold in the gardens their silent, eloquent gestures,  
Which in our case we have not got.

This is the safety-catch, which is always released  
With an easy flick of the thumb. And please do not let me  
See anyone using his finger. You can do it quite easy  
If you have any strength in your thumb. The blossoms  
Are fragile and motionless, never letting anyone see  
Any of them using their finger.

And this you can see is the bolt. The purpose of this  
Is to open the breech, as you see. We can slide it  
Rapidly backwards and forwards: we call this

Easing the spring. And rapidly backwards and forwards  
The early bees are assaulting and fumbling the flowers:  
    They call it easing the Spring.

They call it easing the Spring: it is perfectly easy  
If you have any strength in your thumb: like the bolt,  
And the breech, and the cocking-piece, and the point of balance,  
Which in our case we have not got, and the almond-blossom  
Silent in all of the gardens, the bees going backwards and forwards,  
    For today we have naming of parts.

**ALASTAIR REID**, *born March 22, 1926, in Whithorn, Scotland, lives in a Spanish village near the French border. He spent his childhood in a fishing village on the island of Arran, attended the University of St. Andrews, and then served with the British Navy in World War II, mainly in the East Indies. After the war, he lived for several years in the United States, teaching at Sarah Lawrence College. His first book was published here, and in 1952 he returned to Europe. In recent years he has been a European correspondent for The New Yorker.*



ON the crooked arm of Columbus, on his cloak,  
 they mimic his blind and statuary stare,  
 and the chipped profiles of his handmaidens  
 they adorn with droppings. Over the loud square,  
 from all the arms and ledges of their rest,  
 only a bread crust or a bell unshelves them.  
 Adding to Atlas' globe, they dispose themselves  
 with a fat propriety, and pose as garlands  
 importantly about his burdened shoulders.  
 Occasionally a lift of wind uncarves them.

Stone becomes them; they, in their turn, become it.  
 Their opal eyes have a monumental cast.  
 And, in a maze of noise,  
 their quiet *croomb croomb* dignifies the spaces,  
 suggesting the sound of silence. On cobbled islands,  
 marooned in tantrums of traffic, they know their place,  
 faithful and anonymous, like servants,  
 and never beg, but properly receive.

Arriving in rainbows of oil-and-water feathers,  
 they fountain down from buttresses and outcrops,  
 from Fontainebleau and London,  
 and, squat on the margins of roofs, with a gargoyle look,  
 they note, from an edge of air, with hooded eyes,  
 the city slowly lessening the sky.

All praise to them who nightly in the parks  
 keep peace for us; who, cosmopolitan,  
 patrol and people all cathedral places,  
 and easily, lazily haunt and inhabit  
 St. Paul's, St. Peter's, or the Madeleine,  
 the paved courts of the past, pompous as keepers—

a sober race of messengers and custodians,  
neat in their international uniforms,  
alighting with a word perhaps from Rome.  
Permanence is their business, space and time  
their special preservations; and wherever  
the great stone men we save from death are stationed,  
appropriately on the head of each is perched,  
as though forever, his appointed pigeon.





**ANNE RIDLER**, born July 30, 1912, in Rugby, England, lives in Oxford with her husband, Vivian Ridler, printer to the university, and their four children. She was educated at King's College, in London, has published many volumes of poetry and poetic drama, and now divides her time between housekeeping, gardening, and literary work.

I DID not see the iris move,  
I did not feel the unfurling of my love.

This was the sequence of the flower:  
First the leaf from which the bud would swell,  
No prison, but a cell,  
A rolled rainbow;  
Then the sheath that enclosed the blow  
Pale and close  
Giving no hint of the blaze within,  
A tender skin with violet vein.  
Then the first unfurling petal  
As if a hand that held a jewel  
Curled back a finger, let the light wink  
Narrowly through the chink,  
Or like the rays before the sunrise  
Promising glory.

And while my back is turned, the flower has blown.  
Impossible to tell  
How this opulent blossom from that spick bud has grown.  
The chrysalis curled tight,  
The flower poised for flight—  
Corolla with lolling porphyry wings  
And yellow tiger markings  
A chasing-place for shade and light:  
Between these two, the explosion  
Soundless, with no duration.

(I did not see the iris move,  
I did not feel my love unfurl.)

The most tremendous change takes place in silence,  
Unseen, however you mark the sequence,  
Unheard, whatever the din of exploding stars.

Down the porphyry stair  
Headlong into the air  
The boy has come: he crouches there  
A tender startled creature  
With a fawn's ears and hair-spring poise  
Alert to every danger  
Aghast at every noise.  
A blue blink  
From under squeezed-up lids  
As mauve as iris buds  
Is gone as quickly as a bird's bright wink.  
Gone—but as if his soul had looked an instant through the chink.  
And perfect as his shell-like nails,  
Close as are to the flower its petals,  
My love unfolded with him.  
Yet till this moment what was he to me?  
Conjecture and analogy;  
Conceived, and yet unknown;  
Behind this narrow barrier of bone  
Distant as any foreign land could be.

*I have seen the light of day,  
Was it sight or taste or smell?  
What I have been, who can tell?  
What I shall be, who can say?*

He floats in life as a lily in the pool  
Free and yet rooted;  
And strong though seeming frail,  
Like the ghost fritillary  
That trails its first-appearing bud  
As though too weak to raise it from the mud,  
But is stronger than you dream,  
And soon will lift its paper lantern  
High upon an arched and sinewy stem.

His smiles are all largesse,  
Need ask for no return,  
Since give and take are meaningless  
To one who gives by needing  
And takes our love for granted  
And grants a favour even by his greed.  
The ballet of his twirling hands  
His chirping and his loving sounds,  
Perpetual expectation  
Perpetual surprise—  
Not a lifetime satisfies  
For watching, every thing he does  
We wish him to do always.

*Only in a lover's eyes  
Shall I be so approved again;  
Only the other side of pain  
Can truth again be all I speak,  
Or I again possess  
A saint's hilarious carelessness.*

He rows about his ocean  
With its leaning cliffs and towers,  
A horizontal being,  
Straddled by walking people  
By table-legs and chairs;  
And sees the world as you can see  
Upside-down in water  
The wavering heights of trees  
Whose roots hang from your eyes.  
Then Time begins to trail  
In vanishing smoke behind him,  
A vertical creature now  
With a pocket full of nails,  
One of a gang of urchin boys  
Who proves his sex by robber noise—

Roar of the sucking dove  
And thunder of the wren.  
Terror waits in the woods  
But in the sun he is brazen  
Because our love is his  
No matter what he does;  
His very weakness claims a share  
In the larger strength of others,  
And perfect in our eyes  
He is only vulnerable there.

But not immortal there, alas.  
We cannot keep, and see. The shapes of clouds  
Which alter as we gaze  
Are not more transient than these living forms  
Which we so long to hold  
For ever in the moment's mould.  
The figures frozen in the camera's record  
And carried with us from the past  
Are like those objects buried with the dead—  
Temporal treasures irrelevant to their need.  
Yes, this is the worst:  
The living truth is lost,  
And is supplanted by these album smiles.

*What you desire to keep, you slay:  
While you watch me, I am going.  
Wiser than you, I would not stay  
Even if I could: my hope's in growing.  
My form as a dapple of sun that flies  
On the brook, is changed; my earliest word  
Is the call you learnt to recognize  
And now forget, of a strange bird.*

Yet, as the calyx contains the life of the bud  
So the bud is contained within the flower

Though past in time:  
The end is not more true than the beginning,  
Nor is the promise cancelled by the prime.  
Not only what he was, and is, but what he might have been,  
In each is rolled within.  
Our life depends on that:  
What other claim have we to resurrection?  
For now that we can contemplate perfection  
We have lost the knack of being it. What should be saved  
Of these distorted lives?  
All we can pray is

Save us from Nothingness.

Nothingness, which all men dread;  
Which makes us feel an irrational pity for the dead,  
And fight the anodyne  
Even while we long for deliverance from pain.

So, I have read,  
When a man gave his darling in grief to the grave  
About her neck in a locket tied  
He set this urgent word—  
Not to drink Lethe, at all costs not to forget.  
And this is truth to us, even yet.  
For if life is eternal  
All must be held, though all must be redeemed.  
But what can ever restore  
To these sad and short-coming lives of ours  
The lovely jocund creatures that we were  
And did not know we were?  
What can give us at once  
The being and the sense?

Why, each within  
Has kept his secret for some Resurrection:  
The wonder that he was

And can be, which is his  
Not by merit, only by grace.  
It comes to light, as love is born with a child,  
Neither with help nor herald  
(I did not see the iris move) ;  
Neither by sight nor sound—  
I did not feel the unfurling of my love.



**THEODORE ROETHKE**, born May 25, 1908, in Saginaw, Michigan, lives with his wife in Seattle, where he is professor of English at the University of Washington. He grew up in and around a greenhouse owned by his father and his uncle, a circumstance strongly reflected in the many poems in which he dramatizes the consciousness of childhood. He was educated at the University of Michigan and at Harvard, and his teaching career has included positions at Lafayette, Penn State, where he was also coach of tennis, and Bennington, where his wife was then a student. He worked on his first book of poems, *Open House*, for ten years; since then his output has been comparatively prolific and the range of his style and subject matter greatly extended as he has passed through several distinct phases of development. His fourth volume of poems, *The Waking*, was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1954.



I KNEW a woman, lovely in her bones,  
 When small birds sighed, she would sigh back at them;  
 Ah, when she moved, she moved more ways than one:  
 The shapes a bright container can contain!  
 Of her choice virtues only gods should speak,  
 Or English poets who grew up on Greek  
 (I'd have them sing in chorus, cheek to cheek).

How well her wishes went! She stroked my chin,  
 She taught me Turn, and Counter-turn, and Stand;  
 She taught me Touch, that undulant white skin;  
 I nibbled meekly from her proffered hand;  
 She was the sickle; I, poor I, the rake,  
 Coming behind her for her pretty sake  
 (But what prodigious mowing we did make).

Loves like a gander, and adores a goose:  
 Her full lips pursed, the errant note to seize;  
 She played it quick, she played it light and loose;  
 My eyes, they dazzled at her flowing knees;  
 Her several parts could keep a pure repose,  
 Or one hip quiver with a mobile nose  
 (She moved in circles, and those circles moved).

Let seed be grass, and grass turn into hay:  
 I'm martyr to a motion not my own;  
 What's freedom for? To know eternity.  
 I swear she cast a shadow white as stone.  
 But who would count eternity in days?  
 These old bones live to learn her wanton ways:  
 (I measure time by how a body sways).

**I**F I must of my Senses lose,  
 I pray Thee, Lord, that I may choose  
 Which of the Five I shall retain  
 Before oblivion clouds the brain.  
 My Tongue is generations dead,  
 My Nose defiles a comely head;  
 For hearkening to carnal evils  
 My Ears have been the very devil's.  
 And some have held the Eye to be  
 The instrument of lechery,  
 More furtive than the Hand in low  
 And vicious venery—Not so!  
 Its rape is gentle, never more  
 Violent than a metaphor.  
 In truth, the Eye's the abettor of  
 The holiest platonic love:  
 Lip, Breast and Thigh cannot possess  
 So singular a blessedness.  
 Therefore, O Lord, let me preserve  
 The Sense that does so fitly serve,  
 Take Tongue and Ear—all else I have—  
 Let Light attend me to the grave!

*This poem, written from the point of view of a child as he encounters the world of nature, has the air of an epiphany—a showing forth of things of a divine order. Emphasis is placed strictly upon the reality, the particularity, of things observed, and in the process a sense of curiosity gives way to a sense of harmony.*

## A FIELD OF LIGHT

1

CAME to lakes; came to dead water,  
Ponds with moss and leaves floating,  
Planks sunk in the sand.

A log turned at the touch of a foot;  
A long weed floated upward;  
An eye tilted.

Small winds made  
A chilly noise;  
The softest cove  
Cried for sound.

Reached for a grape  
And the leaves changed;  
A stone's shape  
Became a clam.

A fine rain fell  
On fat leaves;  
I was there alone  
In a watery drowse.

2

Angel within me, I asked,  
Did I ever curse the sun?  
Speak and abide.

Under, under the sheaves,  
Under the blackened leaves,  
Behind the green viscid trellis,  
In the deep grass at the edge of a field,  
Along the low ground dry only in August,—

Was it dust I was kissing?

A sigh came far.

Alone, I kissed the skin of a stone;

Marrow-soft, danced in the sand.

3

The dirt left my hand, visitor.

I could feel the mare's nose.

A path went walking.

The sun glittered on a small rapids.

Some morning thing came, beating its wings.

The great elm filled with birds.

Listen, love,

The fat lark sang in the field;

I touched the ground, the ground warmed by the killdeer,

The salt laughed and the stones;

The ferns had their ways, and the pulsing lizards,

And the new plants, still awkward in their soil,

The lovely diminutives.

I could watch! I could watch!

I saw the separateness of all things!

My heart lifted up with the great grasses;

The weeds believed me, and the nesting birds.

There were clouds making a rout of shapes crossing a windbreak of  
cedars,

And a bee shaking drops from a rain-soaked honeysuckle.

The worms were delighted as wrens.

And I walked, I walked through the light air;

I moved with the morning.

ELEGY FOR JANE

*My Student, Thrown by a Horse*

I REMEMBER the neckcurls, limp and damp as tendrils;  
And her quick look, a sidelong pickerel smile;  
And how, once startled into talk, the light syllables leaped for her,  
And she balanced in the delight of her thought,  
A wren, happy, tail into the wind,  
Her song trembling the twigs and small branches.  
The shade sang with her;  
The leaves, their whispers turned to kissing;  
And the mould sang in the bleached valleys under the rose.  
Oh, when she was sad, she cast herself down into such a pure depth,  
Even a father could not find her:  
Scraping her cheek against straw;  
Stirring the clearest water.  
My sparrow, you are not here,  
Waiting like a fern, making a spiney shadow.  
The sides of wet stones cannot console me,  
Nor the moss, wound with the last light.  
If only I could nudge you from this sleep,  
My maimed darling, my skittery pigeon.  
Over this damp grave I speak the words of my love:  
I, with no rights in this matter,  
Neither father nor lover.

THE WAKING

I WAKE to sleep, and take my waking slow.  
I feel my fate in what I cannot fear.  
I learn by going where I have to go.

We think by feeling. What is there to know?  
I hear my being dance from ear to ear.  
I wake to sleep, and take my waking slow.

Of those so close beside me, which are you?  
God bless the Ground! I shall walk softly there,  
And learn by going where I have to go.

Light takes the Tree; but who can tell us how?  
The lowly worm climbs up a winding stair;  
I wake to sleep, and take my waking slow.

Great Nature has another thing to do  
To you and me; so take the lively air,  
And, lovely, learn by going where to go.

This shaking keeps me steady. I should know.  
What falls away is always. And is near.  
I wake to sleep, and take my waking slow.  
I learn by going where I have to go.



**MURIEL RUKEYSER**, *born December 15, 1913, in New York, lives in her native city with her teen-age son. She studied at Vassar College and later taught there and at other colleges for brief periods as lecturer or as poet-in-residence. She was in Spain as a reporter at the outbreak of the Civil War, and her experiences then have been recorded in a number of her poems. Her first book of poems, Theory of Flight, was written after she had completed a ground course at Roosevelt Aviation School. Her subsequent writings include, besides poetry, biographical studies of Willard Gibbs and Wendell Willkie. Her early work reflects an interest in the social and political forms of relationship and communication; in her later writings she makes the more personal emphasis present even in her earliest poem, included here, Effort at Speech.*

SUNDAY shuts down on this twentieth-century evening.  
 The L passes. Twilight and bulb define  
 the brown room, the overstuffed plum sofa,  
 the boy, and the girl's thin hands above his head.  
 A neighbor's radio sings stocks, news, serenade.

He sits at the table, head down, the young clear neck exposed,  
 watching the drugstore sign from the tail of his eye;  
 tattoo, neon, until the eye blears, while his  
 solicitous tall sister, simple in blue, bending  
 behind him, cuts his hair with her cheap shears.

The arrow's electric red always reaches its mark,  
 successful neon! He coughs, impressed by that precision.  
 His child's forehead, forever protected by his cap,  
 is bleached against the lamplight as he turns head  
 and steadies to let the snippets drop.

Erasing the failure of weeks with level fingers,  
 she sleeks the fine hair, combing: "You'll look fine tomorrow!  
 You'll surely find something, they can't keep turning you down;  
 the finest gentleman's not so trim as you!" Smiling, he raises  
 the adolescent forehead wrinkling ironic now.

He sees his decent suit laid out, new-pressed,  
 his carfare on the shelf. He lets his head fall, meeting  
 her earnest hopeless look, seeing the sharp blades splitting,  
 the darkened room, the impersonal sign, her motion,  
 the blue vein, bright on her temple, pitifully beating.



: **S**PEAK to me.      Take my hand.      What are you now?

I will tell you all.      I will conceal nothing.

When I was three, a little child read a story about a rabbit who died, in the story, and I crawled under a chair : a pink rabbit : it was my birthday, and a candle burnt a sore spot on my finger, and I was told to be happy.

: Oh, grow to know me. I am not happy. I will be open:  
Now I am thinking of white sails against a sky like music,  
like glad horns blowing, and birds tilting, and an arm about me.  
There was one I loved, who wanted to live, sailing.

: Speak to me.      Take my hand.      What are you now?  
When I was nine, I was fruitily sentimental,  
fluid      : and my widowed aunt played Chopin,  
and I bent my head on the painted woodwork, and wept.  
I want now to be close to you.      I would  
link the minutes of my days close, somehow, to your days.

: I am not happy. I will be open.  
I have liked lamps in evening corners, and quiet poems.  
There has been fear in my life. Sometimes I speculate  
on what a tragedy his life was, really.

:     Take my hand.     First my mind in your hand.     What are  
          you now?

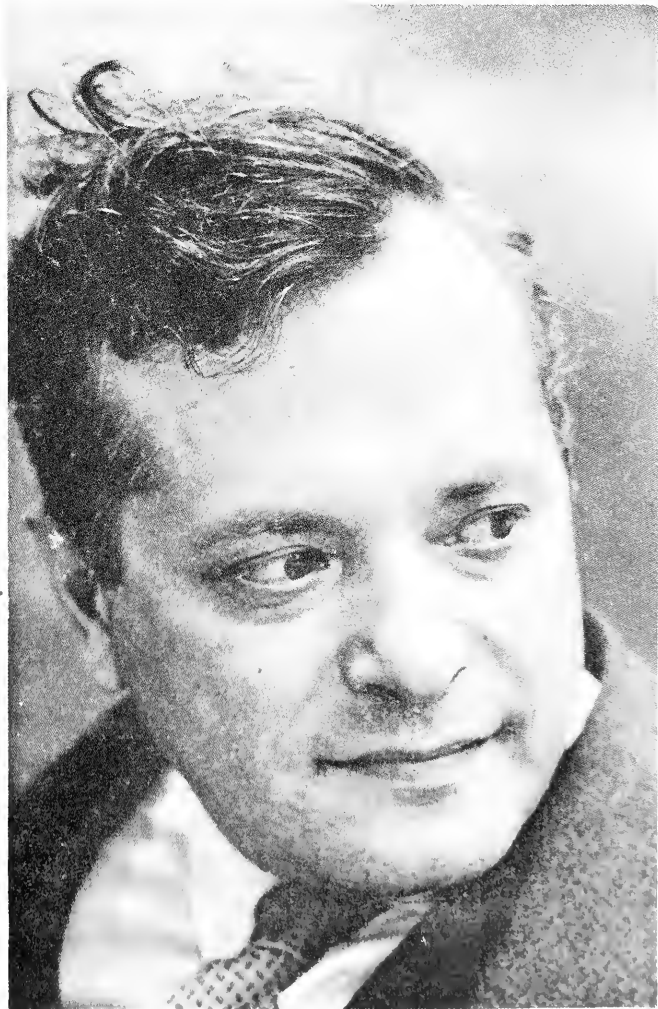
When I was fourteen, I had dreams of suicide,  
and I stood at a steep window, at sunset, hoping toward death :  
if the light had not melted clouds and plains to beauty,  
if light had not transformed that day, I would have leapt.  
I am unhappy.      I am lonely.      Speak to me.

: I will be open. I think he never loved me:  
he loved the bright beaches, the little lips of foam

that ride small waves, he loved the veer of gulls:  
he said with a gay mouth: I love you.      Grow to know me.

What are you now?      If we could touch one another,  
if these our separate entities could come to grips,  
clenched like a Chinese puzzle . . . yesterday  
I stood in a crowded street that was live with people,  
and no one spoke a word, and the morning shone.  
Everyone silent, moving. . . . Take my hand.      Speak to me.

**DELMORE SCHWARTZ**, *born December 8, 1913, in Brooklyn, lives in New York City. He was educated at the University of Wisconsin, New York University, and Harvard University, where from 1940 to 1947 he taught in the English department as a Briggs-Copeland fellow. From 1943 to 1955 he was an editor of the Partisan Review. Besides poetry, his writings include many influential essays on literary themes and a number of short stories, some of which are gathered in a volume entitled The World is a Wedding.*



**W**HERE the sea gulls sleep or indeed where they fly  
 Is a place of different traffic. Although I  
 Consider the fishing bay (where I see them dip and curve  
 And purely glide) a place that weakens the nerve  
 Of will, and closes my eyes, as they should not be  
 (They should burn like the street-light all night quietly,  
 So that whatever is present will be known to me),  
 Nevertheless the gulls and the imagination  
 Of where they sleep, which comes to creation  
 In strict shape and color, from their dallying  
 Their wings slowly, and suddenly rallying  
 Over, up, down the arabesque of descent,  
 Is an old act enacted, my fabulous intent  
 When I skated, afraid of policemen, five years old,  
 In the winter sunset, sorrowful and cold,  
 Hardly attained to thought, but old enough to know  
 Such grace, so self-contained, was the best escape to know.

## THE HEAVY BEAR WHO GOES WITH ME

*"the withness of the body"*—Whitehead

**T**HE heavy bear who goes with me,  
 A manifold honey to smear his face,  
 Clumsy and lumbering here and there,  
 The central ton of every place,  
 The hungry beating brutish one  
 In love with candy, anger, and sleep,  
 Crazy factotum, dishevelling all,  
 Climbs the building, kicks the football,  
 Boxes his brother in the hate-ridden city.

Breathing at my side, that heavy animal,  
That heavy bear who sleeps with me,  
Howls in his sleep for a world of sugar,  
A sweetness intimate as the water's clasp,  
Howls in his sleep because the tight-rope  
Trembles and shows the darkness beneath.  
—The strutting show-off is terrified,  
Dressed in his dress-suit, bulging his pants,  
Trembles to think that his quivering meat  
Must finally wince to nothing at all.

That inescapable animal walks with me,  
Has followed me since the black womb held,  
Moves where I move, distorting my gesture,  
A caricature, a swollen shadow,  
A stupid clown of the spirit's motive,  
Perplexes and affronts with his own darkness,  
The secret life of belly and bone,  
Opaque, too near, my private, yet unknown,  
Stretches to embrace the very dear  
With whom I would walk without him near,  
Touches her grossly, although a word  
Would bare my heart and make me clear,  
Stumbles, flounders, and strives to be fed  
Dragging me with him in his mouthing care,  
Amid the hundred million of his kind,  
The scrimmage of appetite everywhere.

BAUDELAIRE

WHEN I fall asleep, and even during sleep,  
I hear, quite distinctly, voices speaking  
Whole phrases, commonplace and trivial,  
Having no relation to my affairs.

Dear Mother, is any time left to us  
In which to be happy? My debts are immense.  
My bank account is subject to the court's judgment.  
I know nothing. I cannot know anything.  
I have lost the ability to make an effort.  
But now as before my love for you increases.  
You are always armed to stone me, always:  
It is true. It dates from childhood.

For the first time in my long life  
I am almost happy. The book, almost finished,  
Almost seems good. It will endure, a monument  
To my obsessions, my hatred, my disgust.

Debts and inquietude persist and weaken me.  
Satan glides before me, saying sweetly:  
"Rest for a day! You can rest and play today.  
Tonight you will work." When night comes,  
My mind, terrified by the arrears,  
Bored by sadness, paralyzed by impotence,  
Promises: "Tomorrow: I will tomorrow."  
Tomorrow the same comedy enacts itself  
With the same resolution, the same weakness.

I am sick of this life of furnished rooms.  
I am sick of having colds and headaches:  
You know my strange life. Every day brings  
Its quota of wrath. You little know  
A poet's life, dear Mother: I must write poems,  
The most fatiguing of occupations.

I am sad this morning. Do not reproach me.  
I write from a café near the post office,  
Amid the click of billiard balls, the clatter of dishes,  
The pounding of my heart. I have been asked to write  
"A History of Caricature." I have been asked to write

“A History of Sculpture.” Shall I write a history  
Of the caricatures of the sculptures of you in my heart?

Although it costs you countless agony,  
Although you cannot believe it necessary,  
And doubt that the sum is accurate,  
Please send me money enough for at least three weeks.



**WINFIELD TOWNLEY SCOTT**, *born 1910, in Haverhill, Massachusetts, lives with his wife and two children in Santa Fe, New Mexico. From 1931 to 1951 he was a member of the staff of the Providence (Rhode Island) Journal. He is also widely known as a reviewer and essayist.*



HAVING banged the piano too hard  
 Traman turned and looked around  
 And seeing his friends assembled said  
 'To hell with that Almighty sound.

It is,' he said,—with something still  
 Resembling an enlarging air—  
 'My *Fish Sonata*: oversoul  
 Voyaging an underworld despair.

While less than panoramic zeal  
 Eliminated vaster plans,  
 I found myself intrigued between  
 The tadpoles and leviathans;—

Then plumped for giants. And you've heard:  
 A mackerel music round the whales.  
 There's nothing drier than dried fish.  
 Drink up, and I will practise scales.'

And Traman thereupon swung back  
 And found the keys as clean and fair;  
 And, thinking over what he'd said,  
 Wished his friends were really there.

## BLUE SLEIGH

BLUE sleigh that fifty winters gone  
 Swan-breasted heavier snows than ours,  
 Arrested on your summer lawn  
 Stands filled with earth and planted flowers.

Its shafts slant empty to the ground  
As if they'd never held a horse;  
Its runners make the breathless sound  
Allotted rust and ghosts, of course.

The flowers are white geranium.  
Stuck in June grass it looks as though  
Somehow the sleigh had tunneled home  
Through one immortal drift of snow.

Present preservative of past?  
That what it raced through it contains?  
But your illusion will not last:  
Here's white geranium and it stains.

You lover of the incongruous:  
Better to have your blue sleigh drawn  
Through all those daisy fields across  
The hills to time's malignant sun.

**JAMES SCULLY**, born February 23, 1937, in New Haven, lives with his wife in New Brunswick, New Jersey, where he is on the faculty of Rutgers University. He has not yet published a volume, but his poems have appeared in *The New Yorker* and in a number of literary magazines, including *Poetry* and the *Wormwood Review*, of which he was an editor.



THAT the high sheen of death could blot  
this green away, or life survive  
the great ice age, is almost not  
to be believed. Clearly, today's  
raw sunlight ripens into grass  
and grazing cows, as though always  
it has been so. Still, glacial rock,  
like giant bone, breaks through the earth  
and weighs the age-old walls that block  
these fields, the livestock locked within.  
a herd of clear-cut whites and blacks,  
the cows browse in oblivion,  
their muscles ruffling under veils  
of gaudy, violet-winged black flies  
aswarm their hides—and swish their tails—  
thickset, but limber as bullwhips  
perpetually in motion, long  
quick lengths unravelled at the tips,  
from side to side. Nearby, a brace  
of mules tethered to buried stakes  
stand stock-still. And out through space,  
at times, too far away to hear,  
a flashing Sabre-jet transcends  
the mules, the massive cows—a mere  
slow-motioned slip of silver light—  
and wakes a ghostly rainbow arc  
flatly across far hills, its slight

exhaustion burning through the blue  
useless sky, trailing away,  
its destination out of view.

The glacier's gone. The cows assent  
grassward, earmarked with metal tags,  
delicacies of ornament

that glint and tick away the sun  
as their ears twitch, as they remain  
one pulsing mass—as if each one

had undergone the bull, the calf,  
the frost-bit rains, and now held out  
for nothing less than life itself:

such middle-aging gaiety  
as knows not what it was, nor is,  
nor what it is about to be,

nor cares that space thins out, goes dumb,  
that time may cease to come—as if,  
rockbound, this were the kingdom come,

and the hunched fields were crystal-clear  
Jerusalem, and life was judged  
vibration in the summer air.

#### THE GLASS BLOWER

CANARIES were his hobby.

Upstairs in the attic, with his knobby  
hands, he put up small-gauge wire stalls;  
copper gauze, from the slant roof to the floor,  
huddled the birdflock in their drowsy ark.

There were a hundred or more  
that sat on crusted bars, their claws locked tight—  
upright albino bats, until the night-  
time came. When he groped up the stairs, the light  
blazed and they awoke.

The hungry bodies quickened.

A few flew at the screen, but every dark  
reflection glided skillfully on the walls  
behind the gold wheelings—wheels of a clock  
chirping every second on the second.

Gradually it unwound.

And going to work, a Jonah's underground,  
he'd disappear into a warehouse: punch in,  
check orders, stir a batch of sand, start  
the wheel grinding out his daily payload  
of undistracted art—  
and shape a universe, a toy glass ball  
one shakes, seeing the plastic snowflakes fall  
within a pool, upon a parasol  
of plastic (underneath,  
a woman and a man  
were frozen in their strolling). And the haloed,  
high-stooled glass blower, leaning over a Bunsen  
burner, at a wooden bench, would breathe  
glass straws into strings of glass balloons.

They were sold—the rare  
canaries, then pigeons, chickens, and a pair  
of guinea pigs. Experiments, they arrived  
and left, like courses in their covered dish.  
He even bred, in an aquarium,  
rainbow-colored fish:  
then, streaked with orange scars, the slim swordtails  
cut a wakeless way, and the milky sails

of angelfish, razor-thin, edged trails  
of tendrils over rock;  
the snails neither sank  
nor swam, but stuffed their pinkish horns with scum.  
He also stocked black mollies. Short-lived,  
their bulbous heads and tapering bodies, black  
tear-shapes, cruised the bottom of the tank.

Lightheaded bubbles swirled  
surfacewise. Wound in a filmy world,  
a fetus feeding on its inmost part,  
he'd circle bar to bar each night, without  
going far, but staggering home stone blind,  
his pockets inside-out.  
Fleeced, he made the cellar workshop a cage  
of pipes and copper coils, trying to gauge  
the distillation and advancing age  
of alcohol. Ferment-  
ing, dribbling from the lips,  
he would sit wall-eyed with his wheeling mind  
among odd junk. Near a dog-eared sea chart,  
a bottle made a toppled monument  
preserving remnants of a model ship.



*ANNE SEXTON, born November 9, 1928, in Newton, Massachusetts, lives with her husband and two daughters in Newton Lower Falls, not far from her birthplace. She attended local schools, lived for periods in Baltimore and San Francisco, and was a student of Robert Lowell during the years he was at Boston University. She has spent many summers on Cape Cod and in Maine at her ancestral home.*



LETTER WRITTEN ON A FERRY CROSSING  
LONG ISLAND SOUND

I AM surprised to see  
that the ocean is still going on.  
Now I am going back  
and I have ripped my hand  
from your hand as I said I would  
and I have made it this far  
as I said I would  
and I am on the top deck now,  
holding my wallet, my cigarettes,  
and my car keys  
at two o'clock on a Tuesday  
in August of 1960.

Dearest,  
although everything has happened,  
nothing has happened.  
The sea is very old.  
The sea is the face of Mary,  
without miracles or rage  
or unusual hope,  
grown rough and wrinkled  
with incurable age.

Still,  
I have eyes.  
These are my eyes:  
the orange letters that spell  
"ORIENT" on the life preserver  
that hangs by my knees,  
the cement lifeboat that wears  
its dirty canvas coat,  
the faded sign that sits on its shelf  
saying "KEEP OFF."

Oh, all right, I say,  
I'll save myself.

Over my right shoulder  
I see four nuns  
who sit like a bridge club,  
their faces poked out  
from under their habits,  
as good as good babies who  
have sunk into their carriages.  
Without discrimination,  
the wind pulls the skirts  
of their arms.  
Almost undressed,  
I see what remains:  
that holy wrist,  
that ankle,  
that chain.

Oh, God,  
although I am very sad,  
could you please  
let these four nuns  
loosen from their leather boots  
and their wooden chairs  
to rise out  
over this greasy deck,  
out over this iron rail,  
nodding their pink heads to one side,  
flying four abreast  
in the old-fashioned side stroke,  
each mouth open and round,  
breathing together  
as fish do,  
singing without sound.

Dearest,  
see how my dark girls sally forth,  
over the passing lighthouse of Plum Gut,  
its shell as rusty  
as a camp dish,  
as fragile as a pagoda  
on a stone,  
out over the little lighthouse  
that warns me of drowning winds  
that rub over its blind bottom  
and its blue cover—  
winds that will take the toes  
and the ears of the rider  
or the lover.

There go my dark girls;  
their dresses puff  
in the leeward air.  
Oh, they are lighter than flying dogs  
or the breath of dolphins;  
each mouth opens gratefully,  
wider than a milk cup.  
My dark girls sing for this:  
They are going up.

Here are my four dark girls.  
See them rise  
on black wings, drinking  
the sky, without smiles  
or hands  
or shoes.  
They call back to us  
from the gauzy edge of paradise,  
*good news, good news.*

I HAVE gone out, a possessed witch,  
haunting the black air, braver at night;  
dreaming evil, I have done my hitch  
over the plain houses, light by light:  
lonely thing, twelve-fingered, out of mind.  
A woman like that is not a woman, quite.  
I have been her kind.

I have found the warm caves in the woods,  
filled them with skillets, carvings, shelves,  
closets, silks, innumerable goods;  
fixed the suppers for the worms and the elves:  
whining, rearranging the disaligned.  
A woman like that is misunderstood.  
I have been her kind.

I have ridden in your cart, driver,  
waved my nude arms at villages going by,  
learning the last bright routes, survivor  
where your flames still bite my thigh  
and my ribs crack where your wheels wind.  
A woman like that is not ashamed to die.  
I have been her kind.



**KARL SHAPIRO**, *born November 10, 1913 in Baltimore, Maryland, lives with his wife and three children in Lincoln, Nebraska, where he is professor of English at the University of Nebraska. He attended the University of Virginia for a brief and unhappy period and graduated from Johns Hopkins University. He served with the Army in the South Pacific for four years in World War II, during which his first books were published, and on his return was appointed Consultant in Poetry at the Library of Congress. Before going to Nebraska, he taught at Johns Hopkins for several years and then moved to Chicago when he was appointed editor of Poetry: A Magazine of Verse. His critical attitudes are stated in a volume of poetry, Essay on Rime, and in a volume of essays, In Defense of Ignorance.*

*World War II took hundreds of thousands of American soldiers to the other side of the world. This poem, written in 1942, when its author was on military duty in the Indian Ocean, makes particular use of geography and time to suggest the topsy-turvy quality of a life interrupted by global conflict.*

## NOSTALGIA

My soul stands at the window of my room,  
And I ten thousand miles away;  
My days are filled with Ocean's sound of doom,  
Salt and cloud and the bitter spray.  
Let the wind blow, for many a man shall die.

My selfish youth, my books with gilded edge,  
Knowledge and all gaze down the street;  
The potted plants upon the window ledge  
Gaze down with selfish lives and sweet.  
Let the wind blow, for many a man shall die.

My night is now her day, my day her night,  
So I lie down, and so I rise;  
The sun burns close, the star is losing height,  
The clock is hunted down the skies.  
Let the wind blow, for many a man shall die.

Truly a pin can make the memory bleed,  
A world explode the inward mind  
And turn the skulls and flowers never freed  
Into the air, no longer blind.  
Let the wind blow, for many a man shall die.

Laughter and grief join hands. Always the heart  
Clumps in the breast with heavy stride;

The face grows lined and wrinkled like a chart,  
The eyes bloodshot with tears and tide.  
Let the wind blow, for many a man shall die.

## HAIRCUT

O WONDERFUL nonsense of lotions of Lucky Tiger,  
Of savory soaps and oils of bottle-bright green,  
The gold of liqueurs, the unguents of Newark and Niger,  
Powders and balms and waters washing me clean,  
In mirrors of marble and silver I see us forever  
Increasing, decreasing the puzzles of luminous spaces  
As I turn, am revolved and am pumped in the air on a lever,  
With the backs of my heads in chorus with all of my faces.  
Scissors and comb are mowing my hair into neatness,  
Now pruning my ears, now smoothing my neck like a plain;  
In the harvest of hair and the chaff of powdery sweetness  
My snow-covered slopes grow dark with the wooly rain.  
And the little boy cries, for it hurts to sever the curl,  
And we too are quietly bleating to part with our coat.  
Does the barber want blood in a dish? I am weak as a girl,  
I desire my pendants, the fatherly chin of a goat.  
I desire the pants of a bear, the nap of a monkey  
Which trousers of friction have blighted down to my skin.  
I am bare as a tusk, as jacketed up as a flunkey,  
With the chest of a moth-eaten camel growing within.  
But in death we shall flourish, you summer-dark leaves of my head,  
While the flesh of the jaw ebbs away from the shores of my teeth;  
You shall cover my sockets and soften the boards of my bed  
And lie on the flat of my temples as proud as a wreath.

## DRUG STORE

*I do remember an apothecary,  
And hereabouts 'a dwells*

**I**T baffles the foreigner like an idiom,  
And he is right to adopt it as a form  
Less serious than the living-room or bar;  
For it disestablishes the cafe,  
Is a collective, and on basic country.

Not that it praises hygiene and corrupts  
The ice-cream parlor and the tobacconist's  
Is it a center; but that the attractive symbols  
Watch over puberty and leer  
Like rubber bottles waiting for sick-use.

Youth comes to jingle nickels and crack wise;  
The baseball scores are his, the magazines  
Devoted to lust, the jazz, the Coca-Cola,  
The lending-library of love's latest.  
He is the customer; he is heroized.

And every nook and cranny of the flesh  
Is spoken to by packages with wiles.  
"Buy me, buy me," they whimper and cajole;  
The hectic range of lipsticks pouts,  
Revealing the wicked and the simple mouth.

With scarcely any evasion in their eye  
They smoke, undress their girls, exact a stance;  
But only for a moment. The clock goes round;  
Crude fellowships are made and lost;  
They slump in booths like rags, not even drunk.



*Allied with reason and science, the spirit of Faust—  
the legendary German doctor who gained magical  
powers by selling his soul to the devil—moves  
stealthily through history in many disguises.  
According to this poem, his latest manifesta-  
tion is in the collective role of the scientists  
who developed the nuclear bombs.*

#### THE PROGRESS OF FAUST

HE was born in Deutschland, as you would suspect,  
And graduated in magic from Cracow  
In Fifteen Five. His portraits show a brow  
Heightened by science. The eye is indirect,  
As of bent light upon a crooked soul,  
And that he bargained with the Prince of Shame  
For pleasures intellectually foul  
Is known by every court that lists his name.

His frequent disappearances are put down  
To visits in the regions of the damned  
And to the periodic deaths he shammed,  
But, unregenerate and in Doctor's gown,  
He would turn up to lecture at the fair  
And do a minor miracle for a fee.  
Many a life he whispered up the stair  
To teach the black art of anatomy.

He was as deaf to angels as an oak  
When, in the fall of Fifteen Ninety-four,  
He went to London and crashed through the floor  
In mock damnation of the playgoing folk.  
Weekending with the scientific crowd,  
He met Sir Francis Bacon and helped draft  
"Colours of Good and Evil" and read aloud  
An obscene sermon at which no one laughed.

He toured the Continent for a hundred years  
And subsidized among the peasantry  
The puppet play, his tragic history;  
With a white glove he boxed the Devil's ears  
And with a black his own. Tired of this,  
He published penny poems about his sins,  
In which he placed the heavy emphasis  
On the white glove which, for a penny, wins.

Some time before the hemorrhage of the Kings  
Of France, he turned respectable and taught;  
Quite suddenly everything that he had thought  
Seemed to grow scholars' beards and angels' wings.  
It was the Overthrow. On Reason's throne  
He sat with the fair Phrygian on his knees  
And called all universities his own,  
As plausible a figure as you please.

Then back to Germany as the sages' sage  
To preach comparative science to the young  
Who came from every land in a great throng  
And knew they heard the master of the age.  
When for a secret formula he paid  
The Devil another fragment of his soul,  
His scholars wept, and several even prayed  
That Satan would restore him to them whole.

Backwardly tolerant, Faustus was expelled  
From the Third Reich in Nineteen Thirty-nine.  
His exit caused the breaching of the Rhine,  
Except for which the frontier might have held.  
Five years unknown to enemy and friend  
He hid, appearing on the sixth to pose  
In an American desert at war's end  
Where, at his back, a dome of atoms rose.

**LOUIS SIMPSON**, *born March 27, 1923, in Jamaica, British West Indies, lives with his wife and three children in Berkeley, where he teaches in the English department of the University of California. He was educated in British schools in Jamaica and took his Ph.D. from Columbia University.*



A HOT midsummer night on Water Street—  
 The boys in jeans were combing their blond hair,  
 Watching the girls go by on tired feet;  
 And an old woman with a witch's stare  
 Cried "Praise the Lord!" She vanished on a bus  
 With hissing air brakes, like an incubus.

Three hardware stores, a barbershop, a bar,  
 A movie playing Westerns—where I went  
 To see a dream of horses called *The Star* . . . .  
 Some day, when this uncertain continent  
 Is marble, and men ask what was the good  
 We lived by, dust may whisper "Hollywood."

Then back along the river bank on foot  
 By moonlight . . . . On the West Virginia side  
 An owlish train began to huff and hoot;  
 It seemed to know of something that had died.  
 I didn't linger—sometimes when I travel  
 I think I'm being followed by the Devil.

At the newsstand in the lobby, a cigar  
 Was talkative: "Since I've been in this town  
 I've seen one likely woman, and a car  
 As she was crossing Main Street, knocked her down."  
 I was a stranger here myself, I said,  
 And bought the *New York Times*, and went to bed.

## THE GREEN SHEPHERD

HERE sit a shepherd and a shepherdess,  
 He playing on his melancholy flute;

The sea wind ruffles up her simple dress  
And shows the delicacy of her foot.

And there you see Constantinople's wall  
With arrows and Greek fire, molten lead;  
Down from a turret seven virgins fall,  
Hands folded, each one praying on her head.

The shepherd yawns and puts his flute away.  
It's time, she murmurs, we were going back.  
He offers certain reasons she should stay—  
But neither sees the dragon on their track.

A dragon like a car in a garage  
Is in the wood, his long tail sticking out.  
Here rides St. George, swinging his sword and targe,  
And sticks the grinning dragon in the snout.

Puffing a smoke ring, like the cigarette  
Over Times Square, Sir Dragon snorts his last.  
St. George takes off his armor in a sweat.  
The Middle Ages have been safely passed.

What is the sail that crosses the still bay,  
Unnoticed by the shepherds? It could be  
A caravel that's sailing to Cathay,  
Westward from Palos on the unknown sea.

But the green shepherd travels in her eye  
And whispers nothings in his lady's ear,  
And sings a little song, that roses die,  
*Carpe diem*, which she seems pleased to hear.

The vessel they ignored still sails away  
So bravely on the water, Westward Ho!  
And murdering, in a religious way,  
Brings Jesus to the Gulf of Mexico.

Now Portugal is fading, and the state  
Of Castile rising purple on Peru;  
Now England, now America grows great—  
With which these lovers have nothing to do.

What do they care if time, uncompassed, drift  
To China, and the crew is a baboon?  
But let him whisper always, and her lift  
The oceans in her eyelids to the moon.

The dragon rises crackling in the air,  
And who is god but Dagon? Wings careen,  
Rejoicing, on the Russian hemisphere.  
Meanwhile, the shepherd dotes upon her skin.

Old Aristotle, having seen this pass,  
From where he studied in the giant's cave,  
Went in and shut his book and locked the brass  
And lay down with a shudder in his grave.

The groaning pole had gone more than a mile;  
These shepherds did not feel it where they loved,  
For time was sympathetic all the while  
And on the magic mountain nothing moved.

#### MY FATHER IN THE NIGHT COMMANDING NO

**M**Y father in the night commanding No  
Has work to do. Smoke issues from his lips;  
    He reads in silence.  
The frogs are croaking and the street lamps glow.  
  
And then my mother winds the gramophone—  
The Bride of Lammermoor begins to shriek—

Or reads a story  
About a prince, a castle, and a dragon.

The moon is glittering above the hill.  
I stand before the gateposts of the King—

So runs the story—  
Of Thule, at midnight when the mice are still.

And I have been in Thule! It has come true—  
The journey and the danger of the world,

All that there is  
To bear and to enjoy, endure and do.

Landscapes, seascapes . . . Where have I been led?  
The names of cities—Paris, Venice, Rome—

Held out their arms.  
A feathered god, seductive, went ahead.

Here is my house. Under a red rose tree  
A child is swinging; another gravely plays.

They are not surprised  
That I am here; they were expecting me.

And yet my father sits and reads in silence,  
My mother sheds a tear, the moon is still,

And the dark wind  
Is murmuring that nothing ever happens.

Beyond his jurisdiction as I move,  
Do I not prove him wrong? And yet, it's true

*They* will not change  
There, on the stage of terror and of love.

The actors in that playhouse always sit  
In fixed positions—father, mother, child

With painted eyes.  
How sad it is to be a little puppet!

Their heads are wooden. And you once pretended  
To understand them! Shake them as you will,  
    They cannot speak.  
Do what you will, the comedy is ended.

Father, why did you work? Why did you weep,  
Mother? Was the story so important?  
    “*Listen!*” the wind  
Said to the children, and they fell asleep.



**EDITH SITWELL**, born September 7, 1887, in Scarborough, Yorkshire, lives in London and at her ancestral home, Renishaw, Derbyshire, and usually spends part of each year at the castle of her brother, Sir Osbert, in Montegufoni, near Florence. The three Sitwells—Dame Edith, Sir Osbert, and Sacheverell—are the most famous family of writers in the contemporary world. She is known for her distinctive mode of costume, which often suggests the medieval. Her interest in English literary and social history has led to the writing of such books as *Bath*, *Alexander Pope*, *The English Eccentrics*, and a biography of *Elizabeth I*. She has made a number of reading tours of the United States.



SAID the Lion to the Lioness—‘When you are amber dust—  
 No more a raging fire like the heat of the Sun  
 (No liking but all lust)—  
 Remember still the flowering of the amber blood and bone,  
 The rippling of bright muscles like a sea,  
 Remember the rose-prickles of bright paws,  
 Though we shall mate no more  
 Till the fire of that sun the heart and the moon-cold bone are one.’

SAID the Skeleton lying upon the sands of Time—  
 ‘The great gold planet that is the mourning heat of the Sun  
 Is greater than all gold, more powerful  
 Than the tawny body of a Lion that fire consumes  
 Like all that grows or leaps . . . so is the heart  
 More powerful than all dust. Once I was Hercules  
 Or Samson, strong as the pillars of the seas:  
 But the flames of the heart consumed me, and the mind  
 Is but a foolish wind.’

SAID the Sun to the Moon—‘When you are but a lonely white crone,  
 And I, a dead King in my golden armor somewhere in a dark wood,  
 Remember only this of our hopeless love:  
 That never till Time is done  
 Will the fire of the heart and the fire of the mind be one.’

*The particular "occasion" of this poem is the Battle of Britain, when air raids by massive squadrons of Nazi bombers devastated much of London and killed scores of thousands of people. The larger perspective of the poem is the murderous history of mankind under the benign, suffering, eyes of Christ crucified. Dives is the rich man in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus told by St. Luke. The lines "O Ile leape up to my God: who pulles me doune—/See, see where Christ's blood streames in the firmament," taken from the last soliloquy of Doctor Faustus in Marlowe's play, express the hero's terror and possible hope as he tries to evade the penalty of eternal damnation for having sold his soul to the devil.*

STILL FALLS THE RAIN

*The Raids, 1940. Night and Dawn*

STILL falls the Rain—

Dark as the world of man, black as our loss—  
Blind as the nineteen hundred and forty nails  
Upon the Cross.

Still falls the Rain

With a sound like the pulse of the heart that is changed to the hammer-  
beat

In the Potter's Field, and the sound of the impious feet

On the Tomb:

Still falls the Rain

In the Field of Blood where the small hopes breed and the human brain  
Nurtures its greed, that worm with the brow of Cain.

Still falls the Rain

At the feet of the Starved Man hung upon the Cross.

Christ that each day, each night, nails there, have mercy on us—

On Dives and on Lazarus:

Under the Rain the sore and the gold are as one.

Still falls the Rain—

Still falls the Blood from the Starved Man's wounded Side:

He bears in His Heart all wounds—those of the light that died,

The last faint spark

In the self-murdered heart, the wounds of the sad uncomprehending  
dark,

The wounds of the baited bear—

The blind and weeping bear whom the keepers beat

On his helpless flesh . . . the tears of the hunted hare.

Still falls the Rain—

*Then—* { Then—O Ile leape up to my God: who pulles me doune—  
See, see where Christ's blood streames in the firmament:

It flows from the Brow we nailed upon the tree

Deep to the dying, to the thirsting heart

That holds the fires of the world—dark-smirched with pain

As Caesar's laurel crown.

Then sounds the voice of One who like the heart of man

Was once a child who among beasts has lain—

'Still do I love, still shed my innocent light, my Blood, for thee.'

#### SCOTCH RHAPSODY

**D**o not take a bath in Jordan,

Gordon,

On the holy Sabbath, on the peaceful day!'—

Said the huntsman, playing on his old bagpipe,

Boring to death the pheasant and the snipe—

Boring the ptarmigan and grouse for fun—

Boring them worse than a nine-bore gun.

Till the flaxen leaves where the prunes are ripe  
Heard the tartan wind a-droning in the pipe,  
And they heard MacPherson say:  
'Where do the waves go? What hotels  
Hide their bustles and their gay umbrelles?  
And would there be room?—Would there be *room*?

*Would* there be room for me?'

There is a hotel at Ostend  
Cold as the wind, without an end,  
Haunted by ghostly poor relations  
Of Bostonian conversations  
(Bagpipes rotting through the walls).  
And there the pearl-ropes fall like shawls  
With a noise like marine waterfalls.  
And 'Another little drink wouldn't do us any harm'  
Pierces through the Sabbatical calm.  
And that is the place for me!  
So do not take a bath in Jordan,

Gordon,

On the holy Sabbath, on the peaceful day—  
Or you'll never go to heaven, Gordon MacPherson,  
And speaking purely as a private person  
That is the place—*that* is the place—that is the *place* for me!

**WILLIAM JAY SMITH**, *born 1918, in Winnfield, Louisiana, lives with his wife, the poet Barbara Howes, and their two sons in the village of North Pownal, Vermont. He was educated at Washington University, Columbia, and Oxford, which he attended as a Rhodes scholar. During World War II he was Navy personnel officer of a Pacific air base and, for two years, liaison officer aboard a French war vessel in the Atlantic and the Pacific. He has taught at Columbia and at Williams College and is now an active member of the Vermont Legislature. Besides poetry, he has published books for children—Laughing Time and Boy Blue's Book of Beasts, as well as translations of the poems of Laforgue and Larbaud, and The Spectra Hoax.*



Look at him there in his stovepipe hat,  
His high-top shoes, and his handsome collar;  
Only my Daddy could look like that,  
And I love my Daddy like he loves his Dollar.

The screen door bangs, and it sounds so funny—  
There he is in a shower of gold;  
His pockets are stuffed with folding money,  
His lips are blue, and his hands feel cold.

He hangs in the hall by his black cravat,  
The ladies faint, and the children holler:  
Only my Daddy could look like that,  
And I love my Daddy like he loves his Dollar.

INDEPENDENCE DAY

Life is inadequate, but there are many real  
Things of beauty here: the flower peddler's cart  
Adrift like an island in the city streets,  
The peddler's mare, lifting her mighty hoof  
Aware of all that beauty. And the slate  
Where the schoolboy draws his forty-eight  
States, ready to make room for the world.  
The sea's enormous wealth; societies  
Commemorating blizzards in the North; the small  
White birds in the South where trees are tall  
And the hoopsnake bounces downhill like a wagon wheel.  
There are real things of beauty; all  
These things were yours. The shadowy

And fabulous quality of the imaginary  
Is presumed; we know it shall  
One day take the world. Now the sea  
Has but poor mimic in the shell; a bell  
Must free itself of sound, must break with freedom  
To be free. And so you broke, and so you waved  
Farewell to us, and turned away  
To a mirror of completion and of certainty,  
To clocks that tick, and have no time to tell.  
Poems are praise, and poems cannot end.  
There is no answer for we do not ask.  
Upon a cliff of sadness the trees bend  
Strangely toward the sea; the end  
Is in oneself. O our unsuffering, suffering  
Sick friend, so life is adequate  
And you are whole? There are real things of beauty  
Here, and sorrow is our praise. The day  
Is bright, the cloud bank white with gulls.  
And while we lie, and watch the ocean roll,  
The wind, an Indian paintbrush, sweeps the sky.

#### THE CLOSING OF THE RODEO

**T**HE lariat snaps; the cowboy rolls  
His pack, and mounts and rides away.  
Back to the land the cowboy goes.  
Plumes of smoke from the factory sway  
In the setting sun. The curtain falls,  
A train in the darkness pulls away.  
Goodbye, says the rain on the iron roofs.  
Goodbye, say the barber poles.  
Dark drum the vanishing horses' hooves.





**W. D. SNODGRASS**, *born January 5, 1926, in Wilkinsburg, Pennsylvania, lives with his second wife and his two children in Detroit, where he teaches in the creative-writing program of Wayne State University. He attended Geneva College for a year, joined the Navy as an apprentice seaman and, three years later, entered the University of Iowa, from which he graduated. He has taught at Cornell and the University of Rochester. The first book he published, Heart's Needle, was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1960.*

UP the reputable walks of old established trees  
 They stalk, children of the *nouveaux riches*; chimes  
 Of the tall Clock Tower drench their heads in blessing:  
 "I don't wanna play at your house;  
 I don't like you any more."  
 My house stands opposite, on the other hill,  
 Among meadows, with the orchard fences down and falling;  
 Deer come almost to the door.  
 You cannot see it, even in this clearest morning.  
 White birds hang in the air between  
 Over the garbage landfill and those homes thereto adjacent,  
 Hovering slowly, turning, settling down  
 Like the flakes sifting imperceptibly onto the little town  
 In a waterball of glass.  
 And yet, this morning, beyond this quiet scene,  
 The floating birds, the backyards of the poor,  
 Beyond the shopping plaza, the dead canal, the hillside  
     lying tilted in the air,  
 Tomorrow has broken out today:  
 Riot in Algeria, in Cyprus, in Alabama;  
 Aged in wrong, the empires are declining,  
 And China gathers, soundlessly, like evidence.  
 What shall I say to the young on such a morning?—  
 Mind is the one salvation?—also grammar?—  
 No; my little ones lean not toward revolt. They  
 Are the Whites, the vaguely furiously driven, who resist  
 Their souls with such passivity  
 As would make Quakers swear. All day, dear Lord, all day  
 They wear their godhead lightly.  
 They look out from their hill and say,  
 To themselves, "We have nowhere to go but down;  
 The great destination is to stay."

Surely the nations will be reasonable;  
They look at the world—don't they?—the world's way?  
The clock just now has nothing more to say.

#### APRIL INVENTORY

**T**HE green catalpa tree has turned  
All white; the cherry blooms once more.  
In one whole year I haven't learned  
A blessed thing they pay you for.  
The blossoms snow down in my hair;  
The trees and I will soon be bare.

The trees have more than I to spare.  
The sleek, expensive girls I teach,  
Younger and pinker every year,  
Bloom gradually out of reach.  
The pear tree lets its petals drop  
Like dandruff on a tabletop.

The girls have grown so young by now  
I have to nudge myself to stare.  
This year they smile and mind me how  
My teeth are falling with my hair.  
In thirty years I may not get  
Younger, shrewder, or out of debt.

The tenth time, just a year ago,  
I made myself a little list  
Of all the things I'd ought to know,  
Then told my parents, analyst,  
And everyone who's trusted me  
I'd be substantial, presently.

I haven't read one book about  
A book or memorized one plot.  
Or found a mind I did not doubt.  
I learned one date. And then forgot.  
And one by one the solid scholars  
Get the degrees, the jobs, the dollars.  
And smile above their starchy collars.  
I taught my classes Whitehead's notions;  
One lovely girl, a song of Mahler's.  
Lacking a source-book or promotions,  
I showed one child the colors of  
A luna moth and how to love.

I taught myself to name my name,  
To bark back, loosen love and crying;  
To ease my woman so she came,  
To ease an old man who was dying.  
I have not learned how often I  
Can win, can love, but choose to die.

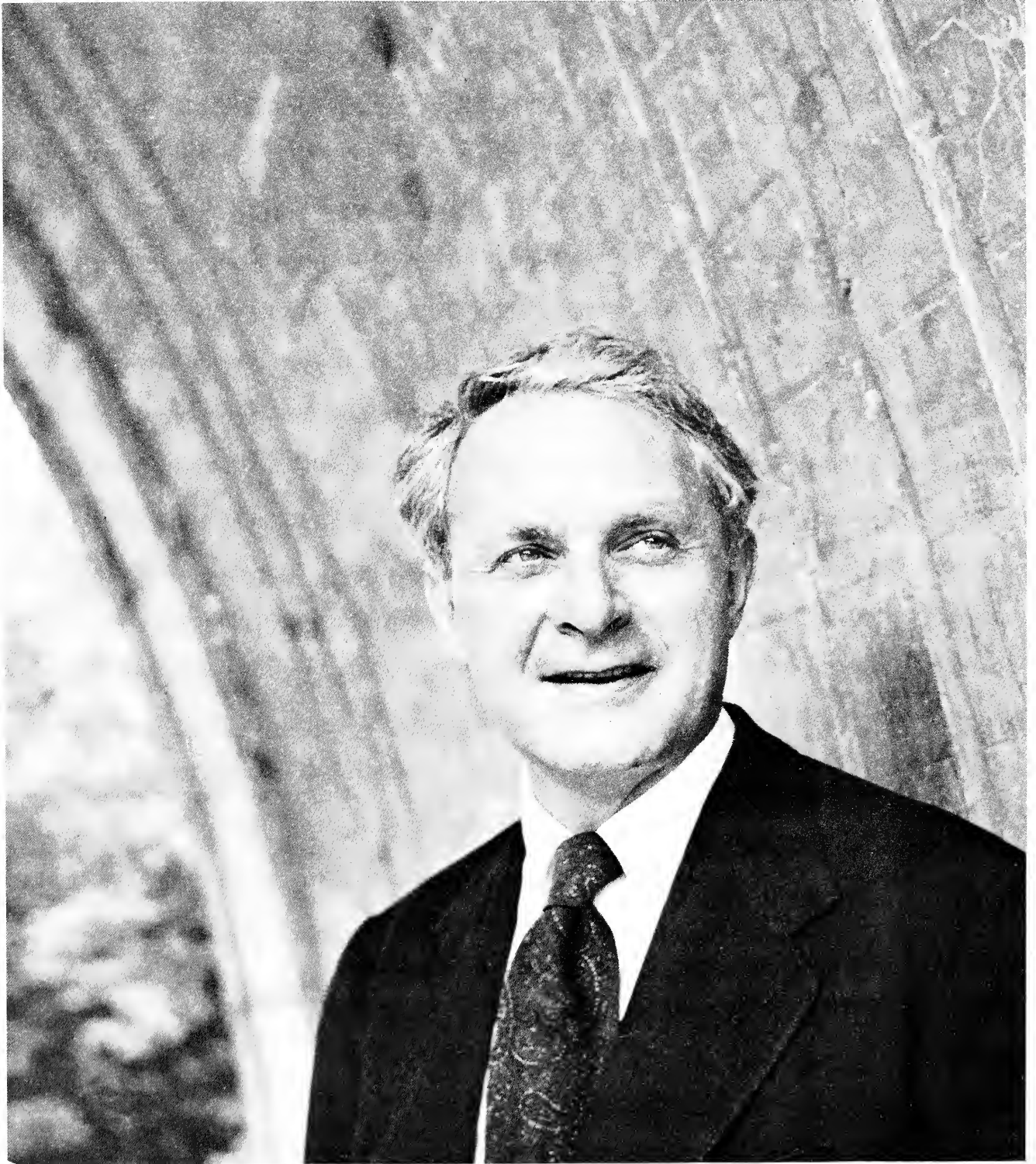
I have not learned there is a lie  
Love shall be blonder, slimmer, younger;  
That my equivocating eye  
Loves only by my body's hunger;  
That I have forces, true to feel,  
Or that the lovely world is real.

While scholars speak authority  
And wear their ulcers on their sleeves,  
My eyes in spectacles shall see  
These trees procure and spend their leaves.  
There is a value underneath  
The gold and silver in my teeth.

Though trees turn bare and girls turn wives,  
We shall afford our costly seasons;

There is a gentleness survives  
That will outpeak and has its reasons.  
There is a loveliness exists,  
Preserves us, not for specialists.

**STEPHEN SPENDER** *was born February 28, 1909, in London, where he now lives with his wife, the pianist Natasha Litvin, and his two children. He was educated at Oxford, where he became a friend of W. H. Auden and with whom he was popularly associated as joint leader of the "English Group," whose other members were Cecil Day Lewis and Louis MacNeice. He is often regarded as a sort of roving ambassador of modern letters, an honorary title attendant upon his lifelong editorial and political activities and his wide travels as lecturer and cultural representative in America, Europe, and Asia. He is a frequent lecturer and visiting professor at American universities. Since 1953, he has been a coeditor of Encounter, an international monthly magazine sponsored by the Congress for Cultural Freedom.*



AFTER the first powerful plain manifesto  
The black statement of pistons, without more fuss  
But gliding like a queen, she leaves the station.  
Without bowing and with restrained unconcern  
She passes the houses which humbly crowd outside,  
The gasworks and at last the heavy page  
Of death, printed by gravestones in the cemetery.  
Beyond the town there lies the open country  
Where, gathering speed, she acquires mystery,  
The luminous self-possession of ships on ocean.  
It is now she begins to sing—at first quite low  
Then loud, and at last with a jazzy madness—  
The song of her whistle screaming at curves,  
Of deafening tunnels, brakes, innumerable bolts.  
And always light, aerial, underneath  
Goes the elate metre of her wheels.  
Steaming through metal landscape on her lines  
She plunges new eras of wild happiness  
Where speed throws up strange shapes, broad curves  
And parallels clean like the steel of guns.  
At last, further than Edinburgh or Rome,  
Beyond the crest of the world, she reaches night  
Where only a low streamline brightness  
Of phosphorus on the tossing hills is white.  
Ah, like a comet through flame she moves entranced  
Wrapt in her music no bird song, no, nor bough  
Breaking with honey buds, shall ever equal.

**F**AR far from gusty waves, these children's faces.  
 Like rootless weeds the torn hair round their paleness.  
 The tall girl with her weighed-down head. The paper-seeming boy with  
     rat's eyes. The stunted unlucky heir  
 Of twisted bones, reciting a father's gnarled disease,  
 His lesson from his desk. At back of the dim class,  
 One unnoted, sweet and young: his eyes live in a dream  
 Of squirrels' game, in tree room, other than this.

On sour cream walls, donations. Shakespeare's head  
 Cloudless at dawn, civilized dome riding all cities.  
 Belled, flowery, Tyrolese valley. Open-handed map  
 Awarding the world its world. And yet, for these  
 Children, these windows, not this world, are world,  
 Where all their future's painted with a fog,  
 A narrow street sealed in with a lead sky,  
 Far far from rivers, capes, and stars of words.

Surely Shakespeare is wicked, the map a bad example  
 With ships and sun and love tempting them to steal—  
 For lives that slyly turn in their cramped holes  
 From fog to endless night? On their slag heap, these children  
 Wear skins peeped through by bones and spectacles of steel  
 With mended glass, like bottle bits on stones.  
 All of their time and space are foggy slum  
 So blot their maps with slums as big as doom.

Unless, governor, teacher, inspector, visitor,  
 This map becomes their window and these windows  
 That open on their lives like crouching tombs  
 Break, O break open, till they break the town  
 And show the children to the fields and all their world  
 Azure on their sands, to let their tongues



Run naked into books, the white and green leaves open  
The history theirs whose language is the sun.

*During the Spanish Civil War, Port Bou was a main point of entry into Spain from France. This poem is the meditation of a sympathetic stranger, ensiled in a remote seaside village, as he encounters the forces of the peasant militia and observes, first with detachment, finally with a grotesque sense of physical involvement, their practice for war.*

PORT BOU

As a child holds a pet  
Arms clutching but with hands that do not join  
And the coiled animal watches the gap  
To outer freedom in animal air,  
So the earth-and-rock flesh arms of this harbour  
Embrace but do not enclose the sea  
Which, through a gap, vibrates to the open sea  
Where ships and dolphins swim and above is the sun.  
In the bright winter sunlight I sit on the stone parapet  
Of a bridge; my circling arms rest on a newspaper  
Empty in my mind as the glittering stone  
Because I search for an image  
And seeing an image I count out the coined words  
To remember the childish headlands of this harbour.  
A lorry halts beside me with creaking brakes  
And I look up at warm waving flag-like faces  
Of militiamen staring down at my French newspaper.  
'How do they speak of our struggle, over the frontier?'  
I hold out the paper, but they refuse,

They did not ask for anything so precious  
But only for friendly words and to offer me cigarettes.  
In their smiling faces the war finds peace, the famished mouths  
Of the rusty carbines brush against their trousers  
Almost as fragilely as reeds;  
And wrapped in a cloth—old mother in a shawl—  
The terrible machine-gun rests.  
They shout, salute back as the truck jerks forward  
Over the vigorous hill, beyond the headland.  
An old man passes, his running mouth,  
With three teeth like bullets, spits out ‘pom-pom-pom.’  
The children run after; and, more slowly, the women  
Clutching their clothes, follow over the hill;  
Till the village is empty, for the firing practice,  
And I am left alone on the bridge at the exact centre  
Where the cleaving river trickles like saliva.  
At the exact centre, solitary as a target,  
Where nothing moves against a background of cardboard houses  
Except the disgraceful skirring dogs; and the firing begins,  
Across the harbour mouth from headland to headland,  
White flecks of foam gashed by lead in the sea;  
And the echo trails over its iron lash  
Whipping the flanks of the surrounding hills.  
My circling arms rest on the newspaper,  
My mind seems paper where dust and ink fall,  
I tell myself the shooting is only for practice,  
And my body seems a cloth which the machine-gun stitches  
Like a sewing machine, neatly, with cotton from a reel;  
And the solitary, irregular, thin ‘paffs’ from the carbines  
Draw on long needles white threads through my navel.



**GEORGE STARBUCK**, born 1931, in Columbus, Ohio, studied at the California Institute of Technology, the University of Chicago, and Harvard. After the publication of his first book, *Bone Thoughts*, he spent a year in Europe as winner of the Prix de Rome and now lives with his second wife in Italy.

WALKING *to the museum*  
*over the Outer Drive,*  
*I think, before I see them*  
*dead, of the bones alive.*

How perfectly the snake smooths over the fact  
 he strings sharp beads around that charmer's neck.

Bird bone may be breakable, but  
 have you ever held a cat's jaw shut?  
 Brittle as ice.

Take mice:  
 the mouse is a berry, his bones mere seeds:  
 step on him once and see.

You mustn't think that the fish  
 choke on those bones, or that chickens wish.

The wise old bat  
 hangs his bones in a bag.

Two chicks ride a bike,  
 unlike  
 that legless swinger of crutches, the ostrich.

Only the skull of a man is much of an ashtray.

Each owl  
 turns on a dowel.

When all the other tents are struck, an old  
 elephant pitches himself on his own poles.

But as for my bones—  
 tug of a toe, blunt-bowed barge of a thighbone,  
 gondola-squadron of ribs, and the jaw scow—

they weather the swing and storm of the flesh they plow,  
out of conjecture of shore, one jolt from land.

*I climb the museum steps like a beach.*

*There, on squared stone, some cast-up keels bleach.*

*Here, a dark sea speaks with white hands.*

NEW STRAIN

**Y**OU should see these musical mice.

When we start the device  
they rise on their haunches and sniff  
the air as if  
they remembered all about dancing.

Soon they are chancing  
a step or two, and a turn.

How quickly they learn  
The rest, and with leaps and spins  
master the ins  
and outs of it, round and round  
and round. We found  
the loudest music best  
and now we test  
with a kind of electric bell  
which works as well.

In two to two-and-a-quarter  
minutes, a shorter  
rhythm captures the front  
legs, and they stunt  
in somersaults until  
they become still

and seem to have lost their breath.

But the sign of death  
is later: the ears, which have been  
flat, like a skin  
skullcap, relax and flare  
as if the air  
might hold some further thing  
for the listening.



**WALLACE STEVENS**, *born October 2, 1879, in Reading, Pennsylvania, died in 1955. He was educated at Harvard and the New York Law School and, in 1904, began to practice law in New York City. From 1916 until his death, he lived with his wife and daughter in Hartford, Connecticut, where he was associated with the Hartford Accident and Indemnity Company, of which he became vice-president in 1934. He did not publish his first book of poems, Harmonium, until he was forty years old. As a businessman, he kept his writing career a strictly private preoccupation and lived wholly apart from literary society.*



*The central issue of this poem is the contrast between the radiant simplicity of a bowl of carnations and the restlessness of the mind that observes it. The issue is closely examined and then resolved in one forthright statement. The true and final paradise for modern man is not the static perfection of a still life, however beautiful it may be, however persuasively it may invite him to emulation, because "The imperfect is our paradise."*

## THE POEMS OF OUR CLIMATE

### I

CLEAR water in a brilliant bowl,  
Pink and white carnations. The light  
In the room more like a snowy air,  
Reflecting snow. A newly-fallen snow  
At the end of winter when afternoons return.  
Pink and white carnations—one desires  
So much more than that. The day itself  
Is simplified: a bowl of white,  
Cold, a cold porcelain, low and round,  
With nothing more than the carnations there.

### II

Say even that this complete simplicity  
Stripped one of all one's torments, concealed  
The evilly compounded, vital I  
And made it fresh in a world of white,  
A world of clear water, brilliant-edged,  
Still one would want more, one would need more,  
More than a world of white and snowy scents.

### III

There would still remain the never-resting mind,  
So that one would want to escape, come back  
To what had been so long composed.

The imperfect is our paradise.  
Note that, in this bitterness, delight,  
Since the imperfect is so hot in us,  
Lies in flawed words and stubborn sounds.

*Beginning with random notations on any man's emotions and on a variety of natural phenomena, the speaker delights in the accidents by which the mind and the natural world are made congruent. This sense of participation, he implies, is not dependent upon myths, gods, religions, but is open to everyone since "ignorant man, alone" has the capacity to see metaphors in nature and to feel that his life is one with the energy that flows through all things.*

#### THE SENSE OF THE SLEIGHT-OF-HAND MAN

ONE's grand flights, one's Sunday baths,  
One's tootings at the weddings of the soul  
Occur as they occur. So bluish clouds  
Occurred above the empty house and the leaves  
Of the rhododendrons rattled their gold,  
As if someone lived there. Such floods of white  
Came bursting from the clouds. So the wind  
Threw its contorted strength around the sky.

Could you have said the bluejay suddenly  
Would swoop to earth? It is a wheel, the rays  
Around the sun. The wheel survives the myths.  
The fire eye in the clouds survives the gods.

To think of a dove with an eye of grenadine  
And pines that are cornets, so it occurs,  
And a little island full of geese and stars:

It may be that the ignorant man, alone,  
Has any chance to mate his life with life  
That is the sensual, pearly spouse, the life  
That is fluent in even the wintriest bronze.

*A grand, well-upholstered, dowager-like lady on a bored donkey rides laboriously upward through the moonlight of imagination to reach the summit of reality; a poor figure of a knight on horseback goes clattering downhill, seeking the sun and the magical realm of the imagination. The lady's mission is hopeless: she already possesses as much reality as her limited mind can accommodate. The man on horseback is more capable. By directing his search into life instead of away from it, he achieves the victory denied her—"The ultimate elegance: the imagined land."*

MRS. ALFRED URUGUAY

So what said the others and the sun went down  
And, in the brown blues of evening, the lady said,  
In the donkey's ear, "I fear that elegance  
Must struggle like the rest." She climbed until  
The moonlight in her lap, mewing her velvet,  
And her dress were one and she said, "I have said no  
To everything, in order to get at myself.  
I have wiped away moonlight like mud. Your innocent ear  
And I, if I rode naked, are what remain."

The moonlight crumbled to degenerate forms,  
While she approached the real, upon her mountain,  
With lofty darkness. The donkey was there to ride,  
To hold by the ear, even though it wished for a bell,  
Wished faithfully for a falsifying bell.

Neither the moonlight could change it. And for her,  
To be, regardless of velvet, could never be more  
Than to be, she could never differently be,  
Her no and no made yes impossible.

Who was it passed her there on a horse all will,  
What figure of capable imagination?  
Whose horse clattered on the road on which she rose,  
As it descended, blind to her velvet and  
The moonlight? Was it a rider intent on the sun,  
A youth, a lover with phosphorescent hair,  
Dressed poorly, arrogant of his streaming forces,  
Lost in an integration of the martyrs' bones,  
Rushing from what was real; and capable?

The villages slept as the capable man went down,  
Time swished on the village clocks and dreams were alive,  
The enormous gongs gave edges to their sounds,  
As the rider, no chevalere and poorly dressed,  
Impatient of the bells and midnight forms,  
Rode over the picket rocks, rode down the road,  
And, capable, created in his mind,  
Eventual victor, out of the martyrs' bones,  
The ultimate elegance: the imagined land.

*This poem is a poetic retelling of a story from the Apocrypha: Susanna, the beautiful wife of Joachim, was spied upon by two Hebrew elders as she bathed. When they attempted to seduce her, she drove them off and soon brought charges against them. They, in turn, charged that it was she who had attempted to seduce them. Their word was accepted against hers and Susanna was condemned to death. But just as she was about to be executed, the prophet Daniel proved her innocence, and the elders were put to death instead. Peter Quince is the namesake of a character in Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Night's Dream." In this poem he appears as a fictitious individual who, moved by passion for a woman who is absent, recreates the story of Susanna in terms of a musical composition played on a clavier, a delicate forerunner of the piano.*

PETER QUINCE AT THE CLAVIER

I  
JUST as my fingers on these keys  
Make music, so the selfsame sounds  
On my spirit make a music, too.  
  
Music is feeling, then, not sound;  
And thus it is that what I feel,  
Here in this room, desiring you,  
  
Thinking of your blue-shadowed silk,  
Is music. It is like the strain  
Waked in the elders by Susanna.  
  
Of a green evening, clear and warm,  
She bathed in her still garden, while  
The red-eyed elders watching, felt  
  
The basses of their beings throb  
In witching chords, and their thin blood  
Pulse pizzicati of Hosanna.

## II

In the green water, clear and warm,  
Susanna lay.

She searched  
The touch of springs,  
And found  
Concealed imaginings.  
She sighed,  
For so much melody.

Upon the bank, she stood  
In the cool  
Of spent emotions.  
She felt, among the leaves,  
The dew  
Of old devotions.

She walked upon the grass,  
Still quavering.  
The winds were like her maids,  
On timid feet,  
Fetching her woven scarves,  
Yet wavering.

A breath upon her hand  
Muted the night.  
She turned—  
A cymbal crashed,  
And roaring horns.

## III

Soon, with a noise like tambourines,  
Came her attendant Byzantines.

They wondered why Susanna cried  
Against the elders by her side;

And as they whispered, the refrain  
Was like a willow swept by rain.

Anon, their lamps' uplifted flame  
Revealed Susanna and her shame.

And then, the simpering Byzantines  
Fled, with a noise like tambourines.

#### IV

Beauty is momentary in the mind—  
The fitful tracing of a portal;  
But in the flesh it is immortal.

The body dies; the body's beauty lives.  
So evenings die, in their green going,  
A wave, interminably flowing.  
So gardens die, their meek breath scenting  
The cowl of winter, done repenting.

So maidens die, to the auroral  
Celebration of a maiden's choral.

Susanna's music touched the bawdy strings  
Of those white elders; but, escaping,  
Left only Death's ironic scraping.  
Now, in its immortality, it plays  
On the clear viol of her memory,  
And makes a constant sacrament of praise.

**MAY SWENSON**, born 1919, in Utah, lives in New York City, where she is an editor of the publishing house *New Directions*. She attended Utah State Agricultural College and then worked for a year as a reporter on the Salt Lake Deseret News before going to New York. She received a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1959 and a National Institute of Arts and Letters Award in 1960.





THE summer that I was ten—  
Can it be there was only one  
summer that I was ten? It must

have been a long one then—  
each day I'd go out to choose  
a fresh horse from my stable

which was a willow grove  
down by the old canal.  
I'd go on my two bare feet.

But when, with my brother's jack-knife,  
I had cut me a long limber horse  
with a good thick knob for a head,

and peeled him slick and clean  
except a few leaves for the tail,  
and cinched my brother's belt

around his head for a rein,  
I'd straddle and canter him fast  
up the grass bank to the path,

trot along in the lovely dust  
that talcumed over his hoofs,  
hiding my toes, and turning

his feet to swift half-moons.  
The willow knob with the strap  
jouncing between my thighs

was the pommel and yet the poll  
of my nickering pony's head.  
My head and my neck were mine,

yet they were shaped like a horse.  
My hair flopped to the side  
like the mane of a horse in the wind.

My forelock swung in my eyes,  
my neck arched and I snorted.  
I shied and skittered and reared,

stopped and raised my knees,  
pawed at the ground and quivered.  
My teeth bared as we wheeled

and swished through the dust again.  
I was the horse and the rider,  
and the leather I slapped to his rump

spanked my own behind.  
Doubled, my two hoofs beat  
a gallop along the bank,

the wind twanged in my mane,  
my mouth squared to the bit.  
And yet I sat on my steed

quiet, negligent riding,  
my toes standing the stirrups,  
my thighs hugging his ribs.

At a walk we drew up to the porch.  
I tethered him to a paling.  
Dismounting, I smoothed my skirt

and entered the dusky hall.  
My feet on the clean linoleum  
left ghostly toes in the hall.

*Where have you been?* said my mother.  
*Been riding,* I said from the sink,  
and filled me a glass of water.

*What's that in your pocket?* she said.  
*Just my knife.* It weighted my pocket  
and stretched my dress awry.

*Go tie back your hair,* said my mother,  
and *Why is your mouth all green?*  
*Rob Roy, he pulled some clover*  
*as we crossed the field,* I told her.



*ALLEN TATE, born November 19, 1899, in Winchester, Kentucky, lives with his second wife, the poet Isabella Gardner, in Minneapolis, where he is professor of English at the University of Minnesota. He is a graduate of Vanderbilt University, where he was one of the founders of The Fugitive, the magazine which served as the mouthpiece of a movement in Southern letters that deeply influenced the careers of a number of writers identified with the "new criticism." One of America's leading literary critics, he has published highly regarded studies of modern literature and has otherwise contributed his talents to a number of editorial and academic positions.*

WHEN Alexander Pope strolled in the city  
 Strict was the glint of pearl and gold sedans.  
 Ladies leaned out more out of fear than pity  
 For Pope's tight back was rather a goat's than man's.

Often one thinks the urn should have more bones  
 Than skeletons provide for speedy dust,  
 The urn gets hollow, cobwebs brittle as stones  
 Weave to the funeral shell a frivolous rust.

And he who dribbled couplets like a snake  
 Coiled to a lithe precision in the sun  
 Is missing. The jar is empty; you may break  
 It only to find that Mr. Pope is gone.

What requisitions of a verity  
 Prompted the wit and rage between his teeth  
 One cannot say. Around a crooked tree  
 A moral climbs whose name should be a wreath.

## DEATH OF LITTLE BOYS

WHEN little boys grown patient at last, weary,  
 Surrender their eyes immeasurably to the night,  
 The event will rage terrific as the sea;  
 Their bodies fill a crumbling room with light.

Then you will touch at the bedside, torn in two,  
 Gold curls now deftly intricate with gray  
 As the windowpane extends a fear to you  
 From one peeled aster drenched with the wind all day.

And over his chest the covers in an ultimate dream  
Will mount to the teeth, ascend the eyes, press back  
The locks—while round his sturdy belly gleam  
The suspended breaths, white spars above the wreck:

Till all the guests, come in to look, turn down  
Their palms, and delirium assails the cliff  
Of Norway where you ponder, and your little town  
Reels like a sailor drunk in his rotten skiff.

The bleak sunshine shrieks its chipped music then  
Out to the milkweed amid the fields of wheat.  
There is a calm for you where men and women  
Unroll the chill precision of moving feet.



**DYLAN THOMAS**, born October 22, 1914, in Swansea, Wales, died in New York City on November 9, 1953. He received no formal education beyond secondary school, and his first professional writing was done as a journalist in his native town. Until his death, which occurred during the fourth of the extensive reading tours he made in the United States, he lived with his wife and three children in the village of Laugharne, on the southwest coast of Wales. His "play for voices," *Under Milk Wood*, has been widely produced in the United States and in Europe, and his recorded readings of his own poems have had an unparalleled success with a large public.



**T**HE hunchback in the park  
 A solitary mister  
 Propped between trees and water  
 From the opening of the garden lock  
 That lets the trees and water enter  
 Until the Sunday sombre bell at dark  
  
 Eating bread from a newspaper  
 Drinking water from the chained cup  
 That the children filled with gravel  
 In the fountain basin where I sailed my ship  
 Slept at night in a dog kennel  
 But nobody chained him up.

Like the park birds he came early  
 Like the water he sat down  
 And Mister they called Hey mister  
 The truant boys from the town  
 Running when he had heard them clearly  
 On out of sound

Past lake and rockery  
 Laughing when he shook his paper  
 Hunchbacked in mockery  
 Through the loud zoo of the willow groves  
 Dodging the park keeper  
 With his stick that picked up leaves.

And the old dog sleeper  
 Alone between nurses and swans  
 While the boys among willows  
 Made the tigers jump out of their eyes  
 To roar on the rockery stones  
 And the groves were blue with sailors

Made all day until bell time  
A woman figure without fault  
Straight as a young elm  
Straight and tall from his crooked bones  
That she might stand in the night  
After the locks and chains  
  
All night in the unmade park  
After the railings and shrubberies  
The birds the grass the trees the lake  
And the wild boys innocent as strawberries  
Had followed the hunchback  
To his kennel in the dark.

*This poem, one of a number that reflect Dylan Thomas's experience when he served as a fire warden during the bombings of London, is based upon a solemn irony. Whereas its title states a firm reluctance to honor the child's death with an elegy, the poem proceeds to do precisely that. To celebrate the event with an elegy, the poet implies, would be to accept it, and this he refuses to do. "I shall not murder/ The mankind of her going with a grave truth," he says, since grave truths are the same old homilies and clichés that have always been spoken at burial ceremonies. He would prefer to honor this death by refusing to see it, not as a single tragedy, but as another frightful reminder of the murderous history of mankind.*

A REFUSAL TO MOURN THE DEATH, BY  
FIRE, OF A CHILD IN LONDON

NEVER until the mankind making  
Bird beast and flower  
Fathering and all humbling darkness

Tells with silence the last light breaking  
And the still hour  
Is come of the sea tumbling in harness

And I must enter again the round  
Zion of the water bead  
And the synagogue of the ear of corn  
Shall I let pray the shadow of a sound  
Or sow my salt seed  
In the least valley of sackcloth to mourn

The majesty and burning of the child's death.  
I shall not murder  
The mankind of her going with a grave truth  
Nor blaspheme down the stations of the breath  
With any further  
Elegy of innocence and youth.

Deep with the first dead lies London's daughter,  
Robed in the long friends,  
The grains beyond age, the dark veins of her mother,  
Secret by the unmourning water  
Of the riding Thames.  
After the first death, there is no other.

*David Thomas, a quiet, gentle, dignified man, was for many years a dedicated schoolteacher who, in his youth, had hoped to become a poet. This poem, written as a tribute by his son as he watched the progress of his father's fatal illness, was completed barely a year before the death of Dylan Thomas himself.*

DO NOT GO GENTLE INTO THAT GOOD NIGHT

Do not go gentle into that good night,  
Old age should burn and rave at close of day;  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Though wise men at their end know dark is right,  
Because their words had forked no lightning they  
Do not go gentle into that good night.

Good men, the last wave by, crying how bright  
Their frail deeds might have danced in a green bay,  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Wild men who caught and sang the sun in flight,  
And learn, too late, they grieved it on its way,  
Do not go gentle into that good night.

Grave men, near death, who see with blinding sight  
Blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be gay,  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

And you, my father, there on the sad height,  
Curse, bless, me now with your fierce tears, I pray.  
Do not go gentle into that good night.  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

*On the map, Fern Hill is located near the village of Laugharne (pronounced larn), in southwestern Wales, where Dylan Thomas lived. In this poem, he gives the name to another location—a hillside farm where, as a child, he spent many summers with his aunt and uncle. This farm has pasture lands overlooking the estuary of the river Towy. The old whitewashed house is surrounded by a number of barns, high mounds of hay, and an apple orchard of great age.*

FERN HILL

Now as I was young and easy under the apple boughs  
About the lilting house and happy as the grass was green,  
    The night above the dingle starry,  
        Time let me hail and climb  
    Golden in the heydays of his eyes,  
And honoured among wagons I was prince of the apple towns  
And once below a time I lordly had the trees and leaves  
    Trail with daisies and barley  
    Down the rivers of the windfall light.

And as I was green and carefree, famous among the barns  
About the happy yard and singing as the farm was home,  
    In the sun that is young once only,  
        Time let me play and be  
    Golden in the mercy of his means,  
And green and golden I was huntsman and herdsman, the calves  
Sang to my horn, the foxes on the hills barked clear and cold,  
    And the sabbath rang slowly  
    In the pebbles of the holy streams.

All the sun long it was running, it was lovely, the hay  
Fields high as the house, the tunes from the chimneys, it was air  
    And playing, lovely and watery  
    And fire green as grass.

And nightly under the simple stars  
As I rode to sleep the owls were bearing the farm away,  
All the moon long I heard, blessed among stables, the nightjars  
Flying with the ricks, and the horses  
Flashing into the dark.

And then to awake, and the farm, like a wanderer white  
With the dew, come back, the cock on his shoulder: it was all  
Shining, it was Adam and maiden,  
The sky gathered again  
And the sun grew round that very day.  
So it must have been after the birth of the simple light  
In the first, spinning place, the spellbound horses walking warm  
Out of the whinnying green stable  
On to the fields of praise.

And honoured among foxes and pheasants by the gay house  
Under the new made clouds and happy as the heart was long,  
In the sun born over and over,  
I ran my heedless ways,  
My wishes raced through the house high hay  
And nothing I cared, at my sky blue trades, that time allows  
In all his tuneful turning so few and such morning songs  
Before the children green and golden  
Follow him out of grace.

Nothing I cared, in the lamb white days, that time would take me  
Up to the swallow thronged loft by the shadow of my hand,  
In the moon that is always rising,  
Nor that riding to sleep  
I should hear him fly with the high fields  
And wake to the farm forever fled from the childless land.  
Oh as I was young and easy in the mercy of his means,  
Time held me green and dying  
Though I sang in my chains like the sea.



**JOHN WAIN**, born March 14, 1925, in Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire, England, lives with his second wife and their son in London. He was educated at St. John's College, Oxford, and then taught at Reading University before resigning to devote his time to writing. His works include novels, short stories, and volumes of criticism and essays, and he has lectured widely in the United States and in India.

THE January sky is deep and calm.  
The mountain sprawls in comfort, and the sea  
Sleeps in the crook of that enormous arm.  
  
And Nature from a simple recipe—  
Rocks, water, mist, a sunlit winter's day—  
Has brewed a cup whose strength has dizzied me.

So little beauty is enough to pay;  
The heart so soon yields up its store of love,  
And where you love you cannot break away.

So sages never found it hard to prove  
Nor prophets to declare in metaphor  
That God and Nature must be hand in glove.

And this became the basis of their lore.  
Then later poets found it easy going  
To give the public what they bargained for,

And like a spectacled curator showing  
The wares of his museum to the crowd,  
They yearly waxed more eloquent and knowing,

More slick, more photographic, and more proud:  
From Tennyson with notebook in his hand  
(His truth to Nature fits him like a shroud)

To moderns who devoutly hymn the land.  
So be it: each is welcome to his voice;  
They are a gentle, if a useless, band.

But leave me free to make a sterner choice;  
Content, without embellishment, to note  
How little beauty bids the heart rejoice,



How little beauty catches at the throat.  
Simply, I love this mountain and this bay  
With love that I can never speak by rote,  
And where you love you cannot break away.

ANNIVERSARY

THESE are my thoughts on realizing  
That I am the same age as my father was  
On the day I was born.

As a little scarlet howling mammal,  
Crumpled and unformed, I depended entirely on someone  
Not very different from what I am to-day.

When I think this over,  
I feel more crumpled and unformed than ever:  
I ask myself what I have done to compare with that.

It also makes me aware, inescapably,  
Of having entered upon the high table-land,  
The broad flat life of a mature man.

Where everything is seen from its actual distance,  
E.g. childhood not so remote as to seem a boring myth,  
Nor senility as something that awaits other people.

But deeper than that,  
It is like entering a dark cone,  
The shadow thrown across my life it derives from.

And deeper than that still,  
It is the knowledge that life is the one communicable thing.  
I called, I heard it from where I slept in seed and liquid.

The patterns of seed and brine coalesced in a solemn dance,  
Whence my life arose in the form of a crest,  
And has carried itself blindly forward until now.

In ignorance of its uniqueness until now,  
Until I stumbled over these thoughts solid as bricks,  
And like bricks fearsome in their everyday squareness.



**ROBERT PENN WARREN**, born April 24, 1905, in Todd County, Kentucky, lives with his second wife, the writer Eleanor Clark, and their son and daughter in Fairfield, Connecticut. Currently a member of the Yale faculty, he was educated at Vanderbilt, California, and Yale and was a Rhodes scholar at Oxford. He has taught at Vanderbilt, at Louisiana State, where, with Cleanth Brooks, he edited the *Southern Review*, at the University of Minnesota, and at Yale. The wide public success of his novels, among them *All the King's Men* and *World Enough and Time*, has at times obscured the fact that he is one of the most accomplished of American poets.

THE oaks, how subtle and marine,  
 Bearded, and all the layered light  
 Above them swims; and thus the scene,  
 Recessed, awaits the positive night.

So, waiting, we in the grass now lie  
 Beneath the languorous tread of light:  
 The grasses, kelp-like, satisfy  
 The nameless motions of the air.

Upon the floor of light, and time,  
 Unmurmuring, of polyp made,  
 We rest; we are, as light withdraws,  
 Twin atolls on a shelf of shade.

Ages to our construction went,  
 Dim architecture, hour by hour:  
 And violence, forgot now, lent  
 The present stillness all its power.

The storm of noon above us rolled,  
 Of light the fury, furious gold,  
 The long drag troubling us, the depth:  
 Dark is unrocking, unrippling, still.

Passion and slaughter, ruth, decay  
 Descend, minutely whispering down,  
 Silted down swaying streams, to lay  
 Foundation for our voicelessness.

All our debate is voiceless here,  
 As all our rage, the rage of stone;  
 If hope is hopeless, then fearless fear,  
 And history is thus undone.

Our feet once wrought the hollow street  
With echo when the lamps were dead  
At windows, once our headlight glare  
Disturbed the doe that, leaping, fled.

I do not love you less that now  
The caged heart makes iron stroke,  
Or less that all that light once gave  
The graduate dark should now revoke.

We live in time so little time  
And we learn all so painfully,  
That we may spare this hour's term  
To practice for eternity.

*The "you" in this poem is anyone who seeks some answer to his nameless sense of guilt, some explanation for a malady no one can diagnose. He tries the clinic, the past, and a rest cure in Florida, but nothing works. He suffers and does not know why. Guilt pursues him as he pursues blindly some solution to a burden as heavy as original sin.*

#### PURSUIT

THE hunchback on the corner, with gum and shoelaces,  
Has his own wisdom and pleasures, and may not be lured  
To divulge them to you, for he has merely endured  
Your appeal for his sympathy and your kind purchases;  
And wears infirmity but as the general who turns  
Apart, in his famous old greatcoat there on the hill  
At dusk when the rapture and cannonade are still,  
To muse withdrawn from the dead, from his gorgeous subalterns;

Or stares from the thicket of his familiar pain, like a fawn  
That meets you a moment, wheels, in imperious innocence is gone.

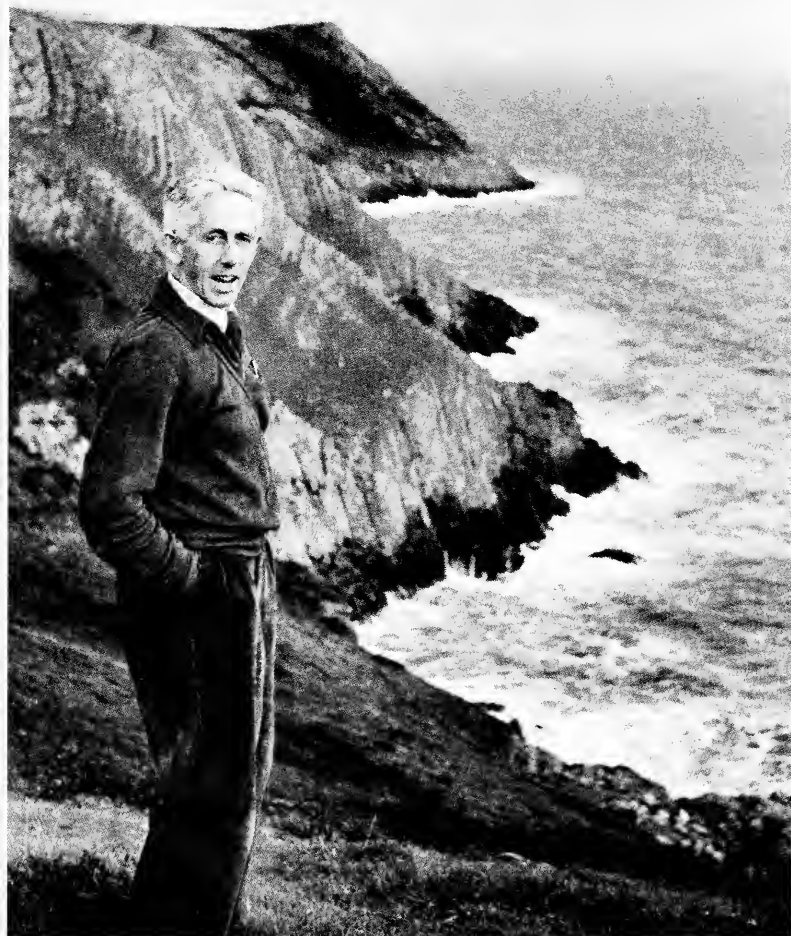
Go to the clinic. Wait in the outer room  
Where like an old possum the snag-nailed hand will hump  
On its knee in murderous patience, and the pomp  
Of pain swells like the Indies, or a plum.  
And there you will stand, as on the Roman hill,  
Stunned by each withdrawn gaze and severe shape,  
The first barbarian victor stood to gape  
At the sacrificial fathers, white-robed, still;  
And even the feverish old Jew stares stern with authority  
Till you feel like one who has come too late, or improperly clothed, to a  
party.

The doctor will take you now. He is burly and clean;  
Listening, like lover or worshiper, bends at your heart;  
But cannot make out just what it tries to impart;  
So smiles; says you simply need a change of scene.  
Of scene, of solace: therefore Florida,  
Where Ponce de León clanked among the lilies,  
Where white sails skit on blue and cavort like fillies,  
And the shoulder gleams in the moonlit corridor.  
A change of love: if love is a groping Godward, though blind,  
No matter what crevice, cranny, chink, bright in dark, the pale tentacle  
find.

In Florida consider the flamingo  
Its color passion but its neck a question;  
Consider even that girl the other guests shun  
On beach, at bar, in bed, for she may know  
The secret you are seeking, after all;  
Or the child you humbly sit by, excited and curly,  
That screams on the shore at the sea's sunlit hurlyburly,  
Till the mother calls its name, toward nightfall.

Till you sit alone: in the dire meridians, off Ireland, in fury  
Of spume-tooth and dawnless sea-heave, salt rimes the lookout's devout  
eye.

Till you sit alone—which is the beginning of error—  
Behind you the music and lights of the great hotel:  
Solution, perhaps, is public, despair personal,  
But history held to your breath clouds like a mirror.  
There are many states, and towns in them, and faces,  
But meanwhile, the little old lady in black, by the wall,  
Who admires all the dancers, and tells you how just last fall  
Her husband died in Ohio, and damp mists her glasses;  
She blinks and croaks, like a toad or a Norn, in the horrible light,  
And rattles her crutch, which may put forth a small bloom, perhaps white.



**VERNON WATKINS**, *born June 27, 1906, in Maesteg, South Wales, lives near Swansea with his wife and four children. He studied modern languages at Magdalene College, Cambridge, and then worked for a time as a clerk in Lloyds Bank. During World War II he served in the Royal Air Force, first as a policeman and then on special duties, eventually becoming a flight sergeant. He was a close friend and poetic mentor to Dylan Thomas, a relationship documented in Letters to Vernon Watkins, published in 1957.*



THE cloud-backed heron will not move:

He stares into the stream.

He stands unfaltering while the gulls

And oyster-catchers scream.

He does not hear, he cannot see

The great white horses of the sea,

But fixes eyes on stillness

Below their flying team.

How long will he remain, how long

Have the grey woods been green?

The sky and the reflected sky,

Their glass he has not seen,

But silent as a speck of sand

Interpreting the sea and land,

His fall pulls down the fabric

Of all that windy scene.

Sailing with clouds and woods behind,

Pausing in leisured flight,

He stepped, alighting on a stone,

Dropped from the stars of night.

He stood there unconcerned with day,

Deaf to the tumult of the bay,

Watching a stone in water,

A fish's hidden light.

Sharp rocks drive back the breaking waves,

Confusing sea with air.

Bundles of spray blown mountain-high

Have left the shingle bare.

A shipwrecked anchor wedged by rocks,

Loosed by the thundering equinox,

Divides the herded waters,  
The stallion and his mare.

Yet no distraction breaks the watch  
Of that time-killing bird.  
He stands unmoving on the stone;  
Since dawn he has not stirred.  
Calamity about him cries,  
But he has fixed his golden eyes  
On water's crooked tablet,  
On light's reflected word.

*This poem takes its title from the famous set of  
six tapestries (1509–1513) now in the Cluny Museum,  
in Paris. The first five panels deal with the senses  
of sight, hearing, smell, touch, and taste, and the  
sixth is “à mon seul désir.”*

#### THE LADY WITH THE UNICORN

**A**BOUT this lady many fruitful trees.  
There the chaste unicorn before her knees  
Stares in a glass to purify her sight.  
At her right hand a lion sits,  
And through the foliage, in and out, there flits  
Many a bird; then hounds, with deer in flight:  
Light is her element; her tapestry is light.  
  
There is her mediaeval music met.  
On the high table-top, with damask set  
To charm, between the chaste beast and the strong,  
An organ which her fingers play

Rests, and her pretty servant's hands obey  
Those pipes with bellows to sustain their song  
Attuned to distant stars, making their short life long.

This ended, gathered from some leafy way,  
That servant brings her flowers upon a tray.  
She lifts them to inhale their magic breath.  
Caught in that breath's elusive maze,  
She marvels. On a stool a monkey plays  
With flowers from wicker trailing, strewn beneath,  
A heaven of fragrance breathing through their mask of death.

Next, her right hand upholds that coat-of-arms  
Seeming love's guardian against war's alarms,  
And with her left she grips the upright horn.  
This touch, while birds through branches peer,  
Consecrates all the beasts as they appear,  
Frisking among dark foliage to adorn  
Her fingers that caress the constant unicorn.

A lion rampant grips the upright pole.  
Her serving-maid now proffers her a bowl  
Of peaches, damsons, almonds, grapes, and sweets.  
This lady savours one, and sees  
How white of almonds, red of mulberries,  
Is each a praise no other tree repeats,  
Now strangely on love's tree engrafted while she eats.

The senses leave a chain upon her tongue.  
That place is hushed, from which the light is sprung.  
Curtains are hung, embroidered with strange art.  
The letters 'TO MY SOLE DESIRE'  
Crown that pavilion with a band of fire  
Whose folds the unicorn and lion part,  
Revealing in their midst her love-awakened heart.

O sovereign balm to heal all mortal illness:  
Long let him look, and still he will find stillness,  
Her one betrothed, who sees her museful face.  
This lady, with her flowers and hounds,  
Woven in light, in air, in wooded grounds,  
Transmits a glory wrought about her grace,  
Caught in a sacred bond within the encircling space.

Let him look softly, with some seventh sense  
Breaking that circle's hushed magnificence,  
And see what universe her love controls,  
Moving with hushed, divine intent  
Through the five senses to their sacrament  
Whose Eden turns between two silent poles,  
Creating with pure speed that harmony of souls.

Where is the heart of mathematic space?  
Throned on a mystery in that leafy place,  
This lady's fingers hold, where distance flies,  
The Past and Future like a skein  
For her betrothed to wind, and loose again.  
Lion and unicorn forbid disguise.  
He looks, and she looks forth: there are no other eyes.

**RICHARD WILBUR**, *born March 1, 1921, in New York City, lives with his wife and four children in Portland, Connecticut. He is a graduate of Amherst College and has taught English literature at Harvard, Wellesley, and Wesleyan University, where he is now professor of English. In World War II he served in the infantry, mainly in Italy, and later spent long periods of residence with his family there and in France, New Mexico, and Texas. He wrote most of the lyrics for the Lillian Hellman-Leonard Bernstein musical Candide; his translation of Molière's Le Misanthrope was given an off-Broadway production in 1959.*



“FAR enough down is China,” somebody said.  
 “Dig deep enough and you might see the sky  
 As clear as at the bottom of a well.  
 Except it would be real—a different sky.  
 Then you could burrow down until you came  
 To China! Oh, it’s nothing like New Jersey.  
 There’s people, trees, and houses, and all that,  
 But much, much different. Nothing looks the same.”

I went and got the trowel out of the shed  
 And sweated like a coolie all that morning,  
 Digging a hole beside the lilac-bush,  
 Down on my hands and knees. It was a sort  
 Of praying, I suspect. I watched my hand  
 Dig deep and darker, and I tried and tried  
 To dream a place where nothing was the same.  
 The trowel never did break through to blue.

Before the dream could weary of itself  
 My eyes were tired of looking into darkness,  
 My sunbaked head of hanging down a hole.  
 I stood up in a place I had forgotten,  
 Blinking and staggering while the earth went round  
 And showed me silver barns, the fields dozing  
 In palls of brightness, patens growing and gone  
 In the tides of leaves, and the whole sky china blue.  
 Until I got my balance back again  
 All that I saw was China, China, China.

**B**EASTS in their major freedom  
 Slumber in peace tonight. The gull on his ledge  
 Dreams in the guts of himself the moon-plucked waves below,  
 And the sunfish leans on a stone, slept  
     By the lyric water,  
     In which the spotless feet  
 Of deer make dulcet splashes, and to which  
 The ripped mouse, safe in the owl's talon, cries  
     Concordance. Here there is no such harm  
     And no such darkness  
     As the selfsame moon observes  
 Where, warped in window-glass, it sponsors now  
 The werewolf's painful change. Turning his head away  
     On the sweaty bolster, he tries to remember  
     The mood of manhood,  
     But lies at last, as always,  
 Letting it happen, the fierce fur soft to his face,  
 Hearing with sharper ears the wind's exciting minors,  
     The leaves' panic, and the degradation  
     Of the heavy streams.  
     Meantime, at high windows  
 Far from thicket and pad-fall, suitors of excellence  
 Sigh and turn from their work to construe again the painful  
     Beauty of heaven, the lucid moon  
     And the risen hunter,  
     Making such dreams for men  
 As told will break their hearts as always, bringing  
 Monsters into the city, crows on the public statues,  
     Navies fed to the fish in the dark  
     Unbridled waters.

*Spilling language and minute observations from stanza to stanza, this poem imitates an elaborate fountain that spills water in fixed yet constantly varied patterns.*

*A trefoil is a tripartite design. A reticulum is a network. Areté is a Greek word roughly meaning virtue.*

*In Chapter V of the Life of St. Francis, there is mention of Francis's often lying or sleeping in the snow and cold, and, in Chapter VIII of the Little Flowers of St. Francis, the saint tells Friar Leo that perfect joy might come of patiently suffering exclusion by a doorkeeper who "... maketh us stay outside hungry and cold all night in the rain and snow."*

#### A BAROQUE WALL-FOUNTAIN IN THE VILLA SCIARRA

UNDER the bronze crown  
Too big for the head of the stone cherub whose feet  
A serpent has begun to eat,  
Sweet water brims a cockle and braids down

Past spattered mosses, breaks  
On the tipped edge of a second shell, and fills  
The massive third below. It spills  
In threads then from the scalloped rim, and makes

A scrim or summery tent  
For a faun-ménage and their familiar goose.  
Happy in all that ragged, loose  
Collapse of water, its effortless descent

And flatteries of spray,  
The stocky god upholds the shell with ease,  
Watching, about his shaggy knees,  
The goatish innocence of his babes at play;

His fauness all the while  
Leans forward, slightly, into a clambering mesh



Of water-lights, her sparkling flesh  
In a saecular ecstasy, her blinded smile

Bent on the sand floor  
Of the trefoil pool, where ripple-shadows come  
And go in swift reticulum,  
More addling to the eye than wine, and more

Interminable to thought  
Than pleasure's calculus. Yet since this all  
Is pleasure, flash, and waterfall,  
Must it not be too simple? Are we not

More intricately expressed  
In the plain fountains that Maderna set  
Before St. Peter's—the main jet  
Struggling aloft until it seems at rest

In the act of rising, until  
The very wish of water is reversed,  
That heaviness borne up to burst  
In a clear, high, cavorting head, to fill

With blaze, and then in gauze  
Delays, in a gnatlike shimmering, in a fine  
Illumined version of itself, decline,  
And patter on the stones its own applause?

If that is what men are  
Or should be, if those water-saints display  
The pattern of our arété,  
What of these showered fauns in their bizarre,

Spangled, and plunging house?  
They are at rest in fulness of desire  
For what is given, they do not tire  
Of the smart of the sun, the pleasant water-douse

And riddled pool below,  
Reproving our disgust and our ennui  
With humble insatiety.  
Francis, perhaps, who lay in sister snow

Before the wealthy gate  
Freezing and praising, might have seen in this  
No trifle, but a shade of bliss—  
That land of tolerable flowers, that state

As near and far as grass  
Where eyes become the sunlight, and the hand  
Is worthy of water: the dreamt land  
Toward which all hungers leap, all pleasures pass.

*The prophet in this poem is a contemporary in whose  
vision the world is laid waste by a nuclear holo-  
caust. Xanthus is the river, also known as  
Scamander, which, according to Homer, was  
scalded by Hephaestus, the fire bringer.*

#### ADVICE TO A PROPHET

WHEN you come, as you soon must, to the streets of our city,  
Mad-eyed from stating the obvious,  
Not proclaiming our fall but begging us  
In God's name to have self-pity,

Spare us all word of the weapons, their force and range,  
The long numbers that rocket the mind;  
Our slow, unreckoning hearts will be left behind,  
Unable to fear what is too strange.

Nor shall you scare us with talk of the death of the race.  
How should we dream of this place without us?—  
The sun mere fire, the leaves untroubled about us,  
A stone look on the stone's face?

Speak of the world's own change. Though we cannot conceive  
Of an undreamt thing, we know to our cost  
How the dreamt cloud crumbles, the vines are blackened by frost,  
How the view alters. We could believe,

If you told us so, that the white-tailed deer will slip  
Into perfect shade, grown perfectly shy,  
The lark avoid the reaches of our eye,  
The jack-pine lose its knuckled grip

On the cold ledge, and every torrent burn  
As Xanthus once, its gliding trout  
Stunned in a twinkling. What should we be without  
The dolphin's arc, the dove's return,

These things in which we have seen ourselves and spoken?  
Ask us, prophet, how we shall call  
Our natures forth when that live tongue is all  
Dispelled, that glass obscured or broken

In which we have said the rose of our love and the clean  
Horse of our courage, in which beheld  
The singing locust of the soul unshelled,  
And all we mean or wish to mean.

Ask us, ask us whether with the worldless rose  
Our hearts shall fail us; come demanding  
Whether there shall be lofty or long standing  
When the bronze annals of the oak-tree close.

**WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS**, born September 17, 1883, in Rutherford, New Jersey, died on March 5, 1963, after a long career as a pediatrician in his native town. He was educated at the University of Pennsylvania, where he took his degree in medicine and where he was acquainted with Ezra Pound and the imagist poet H.D. He has published scores of books which, besides poetry, include his autobiography, short stories, novels, and plays, some of which have been given productions here and abroad. As the leading promoter of a distinctly American idiom in poetry, he has taken as protégés many young writers whose work departs from the English metrical tradition.



THE little sparrows  
hop ingenuously  
about the pavement  
quarreling  
with sharp voices  
over those things  
that interest them.  
But we who are wiser  
shut ourselves in  
on either hand  
and no one knows  
whether we think good  
or evil.

Meanwhile,  
the old man who goes about  
gathering dog-lime  
walks in the gutter  
without looking up  
and his tread  
is more majestic than  
that of the Episcopal minister  
approaching the pulpit  
of a Sunday.

These things  
astonish me beyond words.

*Like the contemporary painter Edward Hopper, who is famous for many paintings that illustrate a just-under-the-surface seam of loneliness in American life, Dr. Williams often takes for his subject some small everyday occurrence that evokes pathos, nostalgia, or a sense of isolation. Both poet and painter present these scenes in terms of simple realism, withholding any comment not implicit in the scene itself.*

## THE LONELY STREET

SCHOOL is over. It is too hot  
to walk at ease. At ease  
in light frocks they walk the streets  
to while the time away.  
They have grown tall. They hold  
pink flames in their right hands.  
In white from head to foot,  
with sidelong, idle look—  
in yellow, floating stuff,  
black sash and stockings—  
touching their avid mouths  
with pink sugar on a stick—  
like a carnation each holds in her hand—  
they mount the lonely street.

*Ostensibly a preachment to fellow citizens on the virtues of simplicity in regard to a funeral, this poem, in the light of the author's long crusade for the use of the native rhythms and natural accents of American speech in literature, may also be read as Dr. Williams's advice to his fellow poets.*

TRACT

I WILL teach you my townspeople  
how to perform a funeral—  
for you have it over a troop  
of artists—  
unless one should scour the world—  
you have the ground sense necessary.  
  
See! the hearse leads.  
I begin with a design for a hearse.  
For Christ's sake not black—  
nor white either—and not polished!  
Let it be weathered—like a farm wagon—  
with gilt wheels (this could be  
applied fresh at small expense)  
or no wheels at all:  
a rough dray to drag over the ground.  
  
Knock the glass out!  
My God—glass, my townspeople!  
For what purpose? Is it for the dead  
to look out or for us to see  
how well he is housed or to see  
the flowers or the lack of them—  
or what?  
To keep the rain and snow from him?  
He will have a heavier rain soon:  
pebbles and dirt and what not.



Let there be no glass—  
and no upholstery, phew!  
and no little brass rollers  
and small easy wheels on the bottom—  
my townspeople what are you thinking of?

A rough plain hearse then  
with gilt wheels and no top at all.  
On this the coffin lies  
by its own weight.

No wreaths please—  
especially no hot house flowers.  
Some common memento is better,  
something he prized and is known by:  
his old clothes—a few books perhaps—  
God knows what! You realize  
how we are about these things  
my townspeople—  
something will be found—anything  
even flowers if he had come to that.  
So much for the hearse.

For heaven's sake though see to the driver!  
Take off the silk hat! In fact  
that's no place at all for him—  
up there unceremoniously  
dragging our friend out to his own dignity!  
Bring him down—bring him down!  
Low and inconspicuous! I'd not have him ride  
on the wagon at all—damn him—  
the undertaker's understrapper!  
Let him hold the reins  
and walk at the side  
and inconspicuously too!

Then briefly as to yourselves:  
Walk behind—as they do in France,  
seventh class, or if you ride  
Hell take curtains! Go with some show  
of inconvenience; sit openly—  
to the weather as to grief.  
Or do you think you can shut grief in?  
What—from us? We who have perhaps  
nothing to lose? Share with us  
share with us—it will be money  
in your pockets.

Go now  
I think you are ready.

## THE BULL

**I**T is in captivity—  
ringed, haltered, chained  
to a drag  
the bull is godlike

Unlike the cows  
he lives alone, nozzles  
the sweet grass gingerly  
to pass the time away

He kneels, lies down  
and stretching out  
a foreleg licks himself  
about the hoof

then stays  
with half-closed eyes,

Olympian commentary on  
the bright passage of days.

—The round sun  
smooths his lacquer  
through  
the glossy pinetrees

his substance hard  
as ivory or glass—  
through which the wind  
yet plays—  
                    milkless

he nods  
the hair between his horns  
and eyes matted  
with hyacinthine curls.

**DAVID WRIGHT**, *born February 23, 1920, in Johannesburg, South Africa, lives with his wife in London. Becoming deaf after having contracted scarlet fever when he was seven years old, he was edu-*



*cated at the Northampton School for the Deaf and later at Oriel College, Oxford. He has been widely active as an editor of anthologies (on some of which he collaborated with John Heath-Stubbs) and of literary magazines.*

COMPOSED at thirty, my funeral oration: Here lies  
 David John Murray Wright, 6'2", myopic blue eyes;  
 Hair grey (very distinguished looking, so I am told);  
 Shabbily dressed as a rule; susceptible to cold;  
 Acquainted with what are known as the normal vices;  
 Perpetually short of cash; useless in a crisis;  
 Preferring cats, hated dogs; drank (when he could) too much;  
 Was deaf as a tombstone; and extremely hard to touch.  
 Academic achievements: B.A., Oxon (2nd class);  
 Poetic: the publication of one volume of verse,  
 Which in his thirtieth year attained him no fame at all  
 Except among intractable poets, and a small  
 Lunatic fringe congregating in Soho pubs.  
 He could roll himself cigarettes from discarded stubs,  
 Assume the first position of Yoga; sail, row, swim;  
 And though deaf, in church appear to be joining a hymn.  
 Often arrested for being without a permit,  
 Starved on his talents as much as he dined on his wit,  
 Born in a dominion to which he hoped not to go back  
 Since predisposed to imagine white possibly black:  
 His life, like his times, was appalling; his conduct odd;  
 He hoped to write one good line; died believing in God.

#### MONOLOGUE OF A DEAF MAN

*'Et lui comprit trop bien, n'ayant pas entendu.'*—Tristan Corbière

IT is a good plan, and began with childhood  
 As my fortune discovered, only to hear  
 How much it is necessary to have said.  
 Oh silence, independent of a stopped ear,  
 You observe birds, flying, sing with wings instead.

Then do you console yourself? You are consoled  
If you are, as all are. So easy a youth  
Still unconcerned with the concern of the world  
Where, masked and legible, a moment of truth  
Manifests what, gagged, a tongue should have told;

Still observer of vanity and courage  
And of these mirror as well; that is something  
More than a sound of violin to assuage  
What the human being most dies of: boredom  
Which makes hedgebirds clamour in their blackthorn cage.

But did the brushless fox die of eloquence?  
No, but talked himself, it seems, into a tale.  
The injury, dominated, is an asset;  
It is there for domination, that is all.  
Else what must faith do deserted by mountains?

Talk to me then, you who have so much to say,  
Spectator of the human conversation,  
Reader of tongues, examiner of the eye,  
And detective of clues in every action,  
What could a voice, if you heard it, signify?

The tone speaks less than a twitch and a grimace.  
People make to depart, do not say 'Goodbye.'  
Decision, indecision, drawn on every face  
As if they spoke. But what do they really say?  
You are not spared, either, the banalities.

In whatever condition, whole, blind, dumb,  
One-legged or leprous, the human being is,  
I affirm the human condition is the same,  
The heart half broken in ashes and in lies,  
But sustained by the immensity of the divine.

Thus I too must praise out of a quiet ear  
The great creation to which I owe I am  
My grief and my love. O hear me if I cry  
Among the din of birds deaf to their acclaim  
Involved like them in the not unhearing air.





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**LOUIS SIMPSON**

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“Good News of Death and Other Poems”  
in *Poets of Today II* (1955)  
*A Dream of Governors* (1959)

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*Clowns' Houses* (1918)  
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